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for
Virginia Frost -
Best good wishes from
Detroit and myself
Sincerely,
Abbie Graham

And Blessing love
from
Marguerite

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HIGH OCCASIONS

BY

ABBIE GRAHAM

AUTHOR OF

Ceremonials of Common Days

Vain Pomp and Glory

New York

The Womans Press

1930

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National Board of the Young Womens Christian Associations of
the United States of America

Printed in the United States of America

This book is given
to

CYNTHIA ANN ELLIS

ON THE OCCASION OF HER SECOND CHRISTMAS, WITH THE HOPE THAT SHE MAY EARLY APPRECIATE THE TENDER MINISTRIES OF HER BROTHER, AGED SIX.

If You Are Thinking of Reading This Book

THESE pages have not been written for persons who have lived any specific number of years but rather for those who have attained a certain imaginative age—whether it be sixteen or sixty. I cannot say whether a grandmother ought to give it to her granddaughter, or a granddaughter to her grandmother. The determination of who should be the donor, who the recipient, depends upon the respective flavor of mind.

The reader who has acquired the ability of looking back upon the exigencies of growing up, its triumphs, its disasters, with a degree of objective pleasure, may pick his way selectively through these occasions with some profit. But if the reader still feels a grudge toward youth, he should put this book away, for it will seem slightly beside the point, in some unexplainable manner.

The only child may respond tardily to these pages. And a brother is almost a prerequisite experience for the feminine reader, a brother who is no longer a liability.

Brothers of a certain kind might appreciate this

book, brothers who once held their sisters' cats ingloriously by the tail, who left behind them heart-breaking trails of sawdust from favorite dolls, brothers who have since forgiven their sisters for being girls.

Do not give this to a girl with the vague hope that it will be helpful to her in the solution of her difficulties. It may not. It is but a sauce for problems that have passed, a spring-board for the memory.

In a way, this is a timely volume. It must be written now before large families have become extinct, before the psychologist has flattened out youth into even levels of normal experience. I would do nothing to block the progress of science; I would only cherish those excellent, unadjusted moments that have enlivened the past of some of us.

A. G.

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PART I

Affairs of Early Youth

On Taking Care Lest One Be Stolen by Fairies

(Written in the interest of children under seven)

ONE encounters so many warnings in one's youth that it is greatly to be wondered at that one is never admonished to take care lest one be stolen by fairies. "Take care that you wear your sweater," or "your mittens." "Button up your coat." "Don't forget your lunch money." "Don't leave your books out in the rain." "Be careful when you cross the railroad track." All these dull precautions are daily suggested but not once are the fairies mentioned. Rubbers, raincoats, street-crossings, are not interesting, so of course one forgets them. Why disturb oneself with the drab properties of a day which are primarily grown-up enthusiasms? *They* will remember them!

But if some morning one's elders should hold a whispered consultation and should then report solemnly, in unison, three times, once before breakfast, once during breakfast, and once as one goes down the walk—

"TAKE CARE TODAY LEST YOU BE STOLEN BY FAIRIES!"

what a morning to be remembered it would be! Stolen by fairies! Such a prospect! Behind every white hedge they might be waiting, from any flowering locust they might descend. Or would they come by in a pumpkin coach, bringing you shoes of glass? Would the doors of the hills slide back to receive you? Would there be an invisible cloak, and all?

By such wonders of speculation might one be accompanied to school, if one's elders did their full duty by advice. It must be that they do not realize the imminence of the danger that lies in wait for children under seven. The newspapers publish no headlines about the number of persons borrowed overnight, as the fairies have no ambition to see themselves in print. Mortals have just never been able to make them understand what prominence is. The guests of honor are not permitted to remember, so the social affairs of this mysterious realm, alas, go unreported.

The journey of the widow of Ballisodare never got into the papers, though she was stolen and kept for seven years. At the end of which time she returned without her toes, as she had danced them all off. She had forgotten about time, the fairies being a time-less race, never being late, never being early. Three hours are as an hour to them, an hour as seven

years, all depending on their absorption in the thing of the moment.

If mothers in their ignorance could but see the hand of the fairies in their children's lives, they would understand *why* they do *what*. Those whose children stay away three hours instead of the alloted one, and explain on their return that they did not know that they had been away for more than one, should never say, "After this, you must get to supper on time," but should see that the fairies are beginning to weave their spell, and should whisper, "Keep your eyes open for elves!" Especially vigilant should be those parents whose children's shoes wear out almost overnight. "Why it was only yesterday that I bought those shoes!" they announce in surprise. They should rather say, "Beware of the gnomes and the will-o'-the-wisps! Remember the fate of the widow of Ballisodare!" Mothers who have neglected to give such warnings should be proud that they have any children with toes left upon them.

Certainly only after much consideration should children be sent on errands, for the percentage stolen while so engaged is particularly high, especially those of Irish or Welsh extraction who are sent after cows and sheep at evening. If it is necessary to have children under seven go any distance in the interests of the enterprises of others, they should be well for-

tified with large slices of bread and butter, with a little jam added to intimidate the fiercer fairies—as they never lure away one who is eating. I have heard that iron will safeguard one from the Little People but I do not personally recommend it as highly as I do some form of food. I myself always preferred the combination of gingerbread and bananas while going after cows, and I met with no disaster.

These precautions have been indeed neglected. If children are not warned against the fairies, how can they know how to put themselves in their way? But how can their elders warn them if they do not themselves believe? Oh, the impoverishing skepticism of this age that deprives youth of its prerogative of dancing through meadows in green moonlight, of banqueting at dawn within a blue harebell!

When the Fireflies Came

NO calendar marked the date of the coming of the first fireflies, no chart gave a clue to their arrival. Some said, "The fireflies are early this year"; or again, others spoke of their being late, but no one knew. The fireflies kept their purposes dark, and descended in accordance with their own high plans. One night they were not; the following night they were. Without warning the long twilight suddenly sparkled with swift mystery. A sort of madness captivated us and sent us hollering down the street, "Come out, you all! Come out! The fireflies are here!"

To children eating their suppers the news sounded, and no martial call of old could have found more loyal response. Knives and forks were put down with a clatter, for all hunger had departed. Many went supperless to bed that night and never remembered their loss. A certain reverence seemed to possess all elders, too; they did not defend the cause of deserted supper tables, as was their custom, nor did they mention the dishes to be washed. Be it also remembered that not a child was called in to go to bed till very late.

When a sufficient majority had assembled in the street, the important question was asked, "Who saw 'em first?" I do not know why this matter had to be settled beforehand but it did not seem to be legitimate to proceed without this decision.

One announced, "I was just going into supper and happened to look up and there they were." This seemed final until another interposed with his evidence:

"Oh, I heard your supper-bell ring and I had seen them ages before that!"

"No," stated another calmly, "Stokey Holmes saw 'em first." All eyes turned to Stokey. He never looked promising, being quiet, sallow and stubby. He advanced no personal claims but his candidacy won *somehow*. "Stokey saw 'em first," we announced to all late-comers, who received the tidings reverentially and in turn informed all who straggled in: "Stokey saw 'em first!"

This decision having been made, the road was quickly filled with children darting after these flashes in the dark. We stumbled over the ruts made by the recent spring rains and ran inadvertently into the ditches at the side where the grass and primroses were studded with scintillating light. Boys with bottles muttered together, bartering their flying gold for commodities long coveted. Some wanted enough to

light their way home, others wished to convert them into lamps to read by.

"Tomorrow I'll know what they are," boasted one.

"Yes, tomorrow, we'll know," others echoed. But each spring they came out into the road no wiser, these boys with the bottles. For us all the mystery remained unconquered by science.

I remember standing still one evening to examine a firefly that I had captured. It walked about in my fist, to explore the various exits, throwing out between my fingers intermittent gleams of cold blue light. It sent forth a peculiar *thwatching* sound as it crawled uneasily about between my fingers, so that I was glad to fling it up into the air and watch it scull its way through the darkness with its strange light. It was then that I discovered the patches of fragrance from the unseen honeysuckle that floated out into the street. Perhaps it had been blooming all along; I could not remember. I watched a star unravel overhead.

But one did not dare to stop long, for boys chased one with fireflies. Of all the things that boys put down one's back fireflies are, I consider, the most irritating, for they are of an uneasy, nervous disposition and a low level of intelligence. Having no sense of direction, no instinct for the nearest exit, they crawl and thrash about, up and down one's

backbone, across ribs, over one's stomach, till they are finally clutched and extracted. It is not an evening for meditation but for dizzy circulation, so the smell of honeysuckle comes only in disjointed whiffs.

This night was always swiftly over; but it did not matter so much, for now summer had come. After this one could always play in the street without a sweater, while people visited together on the porches.

Thus we celebrated in our street this golden evening of early summer. I know of no other occasion like it, though when one goes to the tops of hills at evening or stands on mountains looking down at dusk, there is a sudden moment akin to it when the valleys swarm with the lights of towns. "It is the ways the fireflies come," you would like to explain—but would people understand, people who have never shared in these mad evenings?

On Parting with a Present, Red-Eyed

IT is the birthday present offered up by a donor, red-eyed, that should be appreciated in youth. Such a gift is never a handkerchief; handkerchiefs are bought by grown-ups and can be given away with authentic pleasure. But a tiny doll in the smallest of bathtubs, an engine that runs, a diminutive ice-wagon—in these lie the seeds of disaster. Such gifts are held long in the hand and loved. All thought of their belonging to another vanishes until one confronts the moment of bestowal. A grown-up would perhaps keep the book or the underwear or the necklace, but if one is in the growing season of morals, one must give it up, because "it will be such a pleasure to see Ada Frances enjoy it."

Not long since, I chanced upon a sad youth *en route* to another boy's birthday, holding a little tractor in close embrace. The tears increased with every step. "No one ever gave me a present," he gulped with conviction. "No one."

"Why yes, you have had many presents. Don't you remember your birthday last year, when Bobbie came to dinner?" Bobbie, as I remember, had wept

as he departed because he had to leave behind the truck which he had presented.

"Well, no one ever gave me a tractor." Seeing me still unconvinced, he qualified, "Not *this* tractor."

"But I understand that you are going to get one for your birthday."

"I'll not get this one."

He was right. It was this one that he would forever want, and not another. What were other tractors compared to this, his first love? I knew how his heart was set, how he could never fully love again—in tractors. Should I stand by birthdays and moral development, I who could not yet forget a doll's sewing machine, ordered from afar with all love for a friend, but offered up in tears after I had seen it really sew? How well I knew that I parted with all doll's sewing machines then; for me, there was never another.

One is too young at five to know that often one possesses most fully the things that one never can have. At five there are only tears—tears and tractors.

When One Earns One's First Money

SEPARATE from all the other days in the independence which it confers is that day when one earns one's first money. It is not the actual cash in hand which is so important as the gigantic dreams that the day stirs within one.

For many of us in our town this day was brought to pass by a sign which appeared in a drugstore window. To the grown-up world this announcement doubtless had no significance; but to us who had made no money in the open markets of the world it was a miracle of opportunity. The sign read as follows:

I WILL PAY A SMALL SUM FOR CLEAN BOTTLES.
NO PERUNA BOTTLES ACCEPTED.

We were incredulous at first, each having to go down and see the sign for himself. But when we had all read it aloud several times, we believed, and hurried home.

The financial circles of the world under ten were swiftly revolutionized. Life and activity were restored to the dull summer day. Corporations sprang into existence. One's status in the neighborhood was

determined by the number of bottles one could collect. We interviewed neighbors who had no children, searched dump heaps, and made an inventory of all pantries and cabinets.

"Mother!" came the shout from perilous top shelves.

"Well?"

"Will you need any more of this cough syrup? Nobody has coughed for months."

"And here are two Castoria bottles nearly empty," came a simultaneous voice from father's study. "Can't we pour 'em together?"

"Don't put any medicines together!" came the thriftless ultimatum. Why were they so particular and why had one's family had so few diseases, anyway!

Now there was Mrs. Carr, the invalid of the village, who for the first time became an asset in our eyes. She had long been useful in older circles as a subject for conversation. Mrs. Carr's latest symptoms were sure to be interesting and they filled in many social gaps that otherwise would have been embarrassing. She now vied for prominence with the new milliner and the owner of the sorghum mill which had just been opened that summer. But how to approach Mrs. Carr became the financial problem of the hour. We knew that she was a "nervous woman" and that it would be wise to send in a rep-

resentative and share alike in the spoils. Stokey was elected. Stokey had no special business acumen, but on the other hand he was of an open and guileless disposition, whom all parties could trust. Everybody thought that one ought to "try to help Stokey," and he often fared better than a more shrewd bargainer. As a result of his interview, Mrs. Carr agreed to put on her back porch any bottles that she did not want. These we pro-rated with as much justice as such uneven commodities permit. Our patron herself, aware of the star rôle that she was playing, finished up with the medicine on hand as quickly as possible. Her porch became a bottle collector's paradise.

As soon as we had assembled a sufficient number, the cleaning of the bottles began. Our method seems rather thorough to me even now, as I recall it. We carried water to a zinc washtub in the back yard, took sand and gravel from the walk and soap from the house. Three or four of us soaked and washed, rinsed and wiped, till our hands were wrinkled, talking all the while of our prospects.

"He must think that there's going to be lots of sick people this year."

"It would be good for the bottle business."

"I wish people would stop using Peruna. The Smith's didn't have anything but Peruna bottles. They have stomach troubles, they say."

"Some take it for rheumatism."

"I thought it cured asthma."

"Maybe they're all the same."

Soon two baskets of glass sparkled in the sun and we joined the caravan of bottle venders who were clinking their wares to market, each pondering the meaning of that vague phrase, "a small sum," for on the interpretation of this did their fortunes depend. If anyone had studied these tinkling processions closely he would have noticed that the baskets and boxes shifted frequently from hand to hand. Personally, I was permitted to carry a basket only as far as the thicket, since I was but an acolyte in the service of high finance.

I cannot report accurately the transaction that took place between the drugstore man and our representatives, for the top of my head reached only the level of the counter and I could not see what happened except when he raised a bottle to the light and squinted at it. I do not recall the amount that we received for our first crop of bottles but there was the deepest satisfaction on both sides, the druggist getting his supply for the winter, we finding profitable activity for our surplus time.

After that exchange of bottles for silver we talked largely among ourselves of money matters, talked as men who had been eminently successful. But the period of our affluence was brief, for the bottle

market was soon flooded. There was not the rapid turnover that we had at first rashly anticipated, the health of the neighborhood being discouragingly good. When Mrs. Carr rallied and began helping her husband in the post-office, we knew that the days of our prosperity were over. Partnerships dissolved. We entered a long period of business depression.

Oil derricks now crown the spaces once scoured by bottle prospectors. The ex-bottle merchants who once gathered at Mrs. Carr's back porch now talk of oil royalties and gas rights, forgetting no doubt the days of their apprenticeship. But their children, what are they selling now? Who are the financiers among them? What acolytes follow wonderingly in their train?

On Expecting Mail

I HAD early a high regard for letters. Not many came to our family but their arrival usually precipitated something interesting, caused someone to go or to come, brought good news or bad. Crisp green bills or blue money-orders sometimes slipped out from an envelope.

One of the first such documents that I recall set a high standard of excellence for letters. It came from my father, who was attending the annual conference of Methodist ministers. All the family crowded around my mother as she tore open the envelope. I could not get into the center of the group but had to content myself with a position on the outskirts. Suddenly a shout went up: "It's Leesville! Leesville!" Some change was evidently about to be wrought in our fortunes, but what it was I could not determine. Yet I, too, was outwardly gleeful. A sister ran out of the house in the direction of a neighbor's, I following at her heels. It was almost dark but I could distinguish her figure against the late sunset, as she climbed to the top of the stile. She paused a moment, turned, and hur-

ried back saying to herself, "Leesville!" What, I pondered, was Leesville?

Having had such an introduction to letters, I was in a state of great excitement when, some years later, a person who was going away said, "I shall write you a letter soon." Now I had not dealt with time in the large and I thought, therefore, that soon meant immediately. In a day or two I began to look for the letter. Not having much to do, since it was summer, I decided to go down for the mail myself. The train came about three in the afternoon, and as soon as it had whistled for the three-mile bridge I hurried to the post-office, arriving usually before the mail-bags did. They made no haste to distribute it, I thought. I watched each letter as it fell in our box but mine was never among them. Each day, with utter loss, I saw the sign raised, "Letters Up," and turned down the hot little alley to wait yet another day, the sand burning my bare feet as I ran from shade to shade.

"Why do you go down to that hot post-office?" different members of the family would inquire. I was hesitant about explaining, for fear the letter might never come, but I so wanted to be a person who got letters that I said, "I'm expecting mail today."

I did not dare give up going because I felt that every day was more likely to be the day than any

that had passed. Since I had gone to the office so many days, I did not wish to stop going at the very time of its arrival and have it handed to me by another.

In August, without any warning, the letter suddenly dropped into our box, I being there to see. I made myself wait a moment, then slipped my fingers around it and ran out into the alley. Should I read it there in the shadow of the old store building? But if I read it then, I should not have it left to read. Besides, was not the alley too poor a place, with its cast-off vegetables from the rear ends of the stores, its decaying banana stems, hot in the sun? Turning back into the street I walked slowly the long way home, stopping at the corner to talk with a woman who was watering her four-o'clocks. I wanted to forget, so that I could remember again.

After that I became a person who was "expecting mail." In some subtle way I was a different person. I was no longer of that little town in the sense that I had been. I foresaw almost all that there was to be learned about letters during those weeks when they lived in my imagination—except that I did not know how a letter, long delayed, might come from a person who had died. No one told me that.

On Being Sent on an Errand

ONE lives a disjointed private life in youth, for one is always open to seizure for the advancement of other people's purposes. One may be in the top of a tree and may have to descend to return a tape-measure to Mrs. Wilson; one may be at the climactic point of a book and have to go to run the chickens out of the garden; one may be mixing plaster of Paris and have to stop to let the dog out.

To be sent on an errand is, indeed, a mark of low social status, but it cannot be avoided; that is, not always. Sometimes one may succeed in amending a mother's suggestion by offering, "Let Jack go, I can't. . . ." But mothers can seldom be diverted from their initial decision.

If one is ingenious, one may learn to combine errands with adventures of one's own, suggesting, perhaps, "I am going by to get Carolyn to go with me."

"All right, if you will hurry, but I must have that thread if I am to get your dress finished by tomorrow." The occasion assumes all the proportions of a party, unless Carolyn by chance is already away

in alien parts, running an errand connected with her family.

The greatest hope for the improvement of this situation, so disturbing to the young, lies in the people to whose houses the errands are run. One woman I remember used always to give us something to eat—a cup cake, or fried apple pie, a peach, or pecans. No matter when we arrived, we always got to her house just in time for something to eat. How it would change the ignominious tone of errands if refreshments could be counted on without fail! How quickly could one slide down from a tree, or finish one's spelling; how accurately could one hear one's mother's first summons, if one could always be sure of one of Mrs. Wallace's pies. Persons to whom books and umbrellas have to be returned would do well, also, to keep parrots, monkeys, or alligators. One neighbor, I recall, had a peacock behind a high paling fence, which one went out of one's way to see. It was a joy when she left her sewing-bag at our house.

But there was Mrs. Johnson—and is there not always a Mrs. Johnson in everyone's youth?—who bombarded us with questions.

"How's your mother?"

"All right, I guess."

"How's your father?"

"All right, I suppose; he's off!"

"Gone for long?"

"Dunno."

"The baby well?"

How could one tell about a baby? It always looks the same. It was a relief when she reached for my bucket and filled it with milk. "Keep the lid on and be careful not to spill it," she inevitably admonished. Why should I spill it? I might leave it somewhere on my way home, as I did once on the railroad track, but why did she think that I would come that far to get milk to spill?

The railroad track was in a way a compensation, for someone had told us that if one crossed pins and left them on the rails they would be flattened into scissors. The wind always blew the pins off, yet there was something to look forward to *en route*. Also, the way to Mrs. Johnson's led by the hotel where the drummers sat, and one might find money in the town. A boy once found a dime by the lumber-yard corner, he said.

But errands cannot always be used to further one's own enterprises; for the most part, errands have to be endured. In time one sheds them as one does one's first teeth. There is some indefinable line that marks a change in status. Before a certain time you are sent; after a certain time you send others. There is a vast difference.

On the Charm of Illness in Youth

EARLY youth is the heyday of illness, the climax of its charm. After youth is done, all physical disabilities could be abolished without seriously interfering with anyone's pleasure, if I may except a few individuals here and there who have a genius for conserving the thrills of this childhood pastime. When illness becomes involved with definite anatomy, germ theories and financial losses, it has been deleted of most of its enjoyment. After responsibility has once clipped its wings, it might as well be given up as a pure diversion.

I should almost call illness in youth an art; and yet it is somewhat too purposeful to fulfil art's requirement, since illness is never enjoyed for illness' sake but for reasons best known to the bed-ridden sufferer. Although such sickness may not be put into the category of the arts, yet who is there among us who has not practised it with artistic finish?

To be ill when one is eight—could anything be more delightful! I was strangely puzzled at this age over that recurrent phrase in my father's evening prayer, "Bless the sick and the afflicted." Was sickness considered an affliction? To have the doctor

come, sit by your bed, shake down his thermometer with that accompanying rattle of his stiff cuffs; to have one's brothers and sisters standing about in an admiring and envious circle; to have a sister come home from school in the town, with presents arranged invitingly in a box; to have neighbors hurrying in solicitously with soups and custards—could this be affliction? What was it to me if I stood on the brink of death? A small price to pay for such prominence, was it not?

However, I should like to except earache, to classify it among the real misfortunes. There is no glory in it and much pain. No invalid delicacies are prepared. It is not extraordinary enough to intrigue a teacher into calling. If it is night, one can pound the wall; if it is day, one may count the patterns in the wall-paper or closely study black specks on the ceiling, to see if they are moving; but none of these activities is interesting. Earache I consider a complete liability.

Nor are contagious diseases thoroughly satisfactory. There is so little possibility of distinctiveness. Bedside dainties, made wholesale, are not appetizing to the spirit. Besides, one has no audience, with most of the family in bed and the neighbors afraid to visit. There may be petty rivalries as to which victim of the measles is the reddest or who is the most swollen with mumps, but no one ever wins a clear victory, as

the one who is least red or swollen may have compensating symptoms.

In our section of the country a "bilious attack" was the most rewarding disability. Though it is accompanied by some discomforts, yet it is an exclusive disease. The patient does not have to be quiet, is not restricted as to the number of guests he may have after school. Lemonade is prescribed freely. Biliousness leaves one with a disturbing paleness and an interesting lassitude that frees one from distasteful activities.

But I cannot go into the entire list of desirable diseases—the headaches, the stomach-aches, the fevers, the operations. Almost any disease will do for the celebration of this occasion; but to be perfect, let the malady selected be attended with possible danger, and let it be at a season when many are free to attend upon one's bedside.

The glory of a substantial illness lingers, and prestige gained therefrom, if properly attended to, increases. One has, however, to cultivate its memory, to refer with pathos to the delirious dreams, the awful thirst when one's fever mounted to one hundred and four. It requires some originality and exertion to maintain the status of past crises of interest, for the newer ailments of others are likely to supplant yours in the general sympathy.

A large family is an asset in furnishing one with

data for such boasting. To have had severe illness in the family gives one almost as much importance among one's contemporaries as having suffered first-hand. The children of two prolific families in our town contended over a backyard fence as to whose family had had the most diseases.

"We've had measles," one group shouted.

"We've had mumps," the other hurled back.

"We've had typhoid!"

"We've had neuralgia!"

Those who had led the attack now consulted and sent a statement over the fence that utterly routed their opponents: "We've had scarlet fever, and two of us is dead!"

Not to the strong, indeed, is the battle, nor to the robust the race—at least not when one is eight.

On Giving Up the Stage

A RUMOR had got about that Callie was writing a play. No one knew for certain that she was, yet there was no one who could positively refute it. This was a part of Callie's art, to set us wondering. She herself gave no hint of what she was producing behind the seclusion of her geography. Though we rendered homage in the form of written offers to assist with her arithmetic and spelling, though she generally accepted these, yet she took none of us into her confidence. We only knew that she was illustrating her manuscript with nuns swathed becomingly in black. Callie always had nuns in her stories. In fact she had openly stated that she was still undecided whether to become a nun or an actress. I looked at the tight black curls falling over her shoulders and sighed. I should so like to be writing a play.

I can give little intimation here of the pride that I felt, one evening after school, when she offered to give me a special reading of her mysterious production. I was as one set apart by a high trust. I resolved to live up to her confidence in me. In a solemn manner she announced her title, "Theresa

of the Circus." "Theresa is a nun," she explained. My Protestant soul shivered with pleasure. None of us had ever known nuns except in books but they had a great fascination for all of us. Not being impeded by facts, we could reconstruct their activities and ambitions as our imaginations saw fit.

"Listen to these stage directions," bade Callie, with gestures. "Enter at left Theresa. She takes her seat in an elegant marble chair." It was the "elegant marble chair" that haunted me for years afterward as the ideal of luxurious ease. "Theresa advances to center of stage, exclaiming, 'How *can* I? How *can* I? They think me true, yet how unworthy of all trust am I! . . .'" I had never before known anything so utter as the blackness of this nun's estate as she walked desolately in these "cloisters of duty."

"Then Theresa made her great decision," continued Callie, who now began speaking the part from memory. "'I shall steal secretly away, leaving my past behind me, and enter the circus.'" Suddenly she broke off. "Don't you think it would be just like Theresa to go into the circus?"

"Oh, indeed," I assented quickly, flattered by the consultation. "Exactly like her!"

As a circus dancer there was the same degree of utterness about Theresa that there had been in the cloister, though it was expressed in the abandon of

gaiety. "Now we are coming to the part that will especially interest you," said Callie. "A band of gypsies comes into the circus. They dance. One of the gypsies carries in her arms a child, which you will see later is the Duke's only son, whom the gypsies have stolen. The gypsy speaks to her confederates, 'Shield me from the Duke!' I want you to be that gypsy!" She waited a moment to let the full significance of the honor burst upon me. "You will see soon how the success of the play depends upon the Duke's recognition of his son and heir. Theresa, looking out from the wings, sees the Duke, faints, and can't do her act. You can use a pillow or anything for the son."

But I, too, by this time had entered into a creative mood, and proposed that I dress up our cat for the Duke's son. "It's a nice quiet cat," I added by way of securing favor for the idea.

"Just the thing! It will give so much more life to the part. I'm asking Jimmie to bring his goat for the circus, and Tom Adams his Shetland pony. The Peterson boy said he would try to get their dog. Bill is taking up the tickets. I suppose *I* shall have to play the rôle of Theresa, as it seems too much to ask any one to memorize her lines. Besides, mother has a black shawl that I can use and I can change costumes so quickly."

"Of course you should be Theresa," I agreed quite

honestly, sensing even thus early that this was the producer's prerogative.

As the matinee hour approached, all of the children in our end of the town, together with a large representation of other animals, began noisily to assemble. All the week I had been training our cat for its high rôle, but it began at this point to register uneasiness, licking at the cap-strings tied under its chin and making ominous swishes with its tail among the puzzling nether embroideries.

The first scene, depicting Theresa in the cloister, was a great success. The dim room, the somber costumes, the candles, awed the theater crowd into a respectful silence. But the reaction of the audience to the circus scene was disquieting to the waiting actors. The animals showed no dramatic instinct, retaining their off-stage personalities in an amateurish manner. The goat refused to eat nails, as advertised in the circulars; the dogs felt no racing urge.

The moment for my entrance was indeed inauspicious, but Callie's hand backstage shoved me out. I began my lines in a frightened voice quite suited to my rôle. (Aside to my companions) "Shield me from the Duke!" But before I had caught sight of the Duke, his stolen son had spied the Peterson dog, with whom there was a clash of wills of long standing. I felt the cat stiffen in my arms. Then it bolted, clothes and all. In the wild finale that

followed, even Theresa darted out to see the fight.

I was in terror lest I never be forgiven. I dare say that I might not soon have been re-instated in her favor had not the fight been such an unusually successful one. Callie, seeing how much her audience had enjoyed the impromptu scene, was swift to appropriate the interest thus aroused. Ascending the eminence of a hen-coop, she announced that as soon as quiet was restored, lemonade would be served free to all who cared to stay; that the audience would always find something interesting at these performances; and that she, Theresa, had reconsidered her "great decision" and would re-enter the cloister; that the next play, "Theresa's Penance," would be produced the following Saturday, and the shows would continue as long as the public would stand by her. She received a flattering ovation.

But my recovery was not so instant. What was lemonade, though free! As soon as I had collected the shreds of the cat's properties, I went home by the back way, hoping not to hear the play mentioned at supper. But a brother no sooner took his place at the table than he whispered loudly, "Shield me from the Duke!" Though I feigned indifference, I knew that I could not silence him. In the end it would be fully known. I myself was thoroughly disillusioned about the stage. Success thereon was so fickle, so beyond the power of human control!

Even the cat avoided me. I dreaded to think of Monday morning at school.

Some time later I found myself saying to my friends, "I do not think that I really care to be an actress; my father, you know, might not approve."

"No?"

"No. Ministers don't, you see."

Thus I turned to the drab ways of uneventful respectability. But Callie—surely she yet dances gaily in and out among the stern pillars of society; surely she goes swathed becomingly in black and lingers in elegant marble chairs, doing only such penance as will serve the cause of her chosen art.

On Being Done in Gingham

SPRING sewing as an institution is rapidly passing. The home-made spring dress now only supplements the ready-made wardrobe, and doubtless in time it will be wholly supplanted, but while we still live in the penumbra of its glory should we not preserve that fresh smell of new gingham in spring, together with that old chant of one's elders to which the whirring of the machine played accompaniment?

It was not in the general bustle of the season's sewing that the chant intoned itself in my memory but in a swirl of haste that eddied about me as a center. I should not have had power in myself to disturb the serene flow of daily life had I not been aided by the forces of nature. I had just recovered from a relapse of measles, serious enough to give me quite an enviable position in the neighborhood, to say nothing of the distinction gained in my immediate family. The doctor had advised that I should not return to school that spring, so I stood palely aloof from the academic-fettered world, associating only with scarlet birds and grey-moss playhouses, with wild haws in bloom, and with a child that was not yet two.

It was decided in a general family council that I should accompany a sister who was returning to her home in a town larger than any that I had yet known. After the adjournment of the general council the feminine members of this group set out upon an investigation of my wardrobe. When I had brought forth all my things for inspection, my mother summed up the obvious conclusion of the committee: "You see, she is *simply* out of clothes!"

Following swiftly on the heels of this decision there came a large bundle of many patterns of gingham, which, when opened, revealed an assorted core of colored thread and pearl buttons mounted on shining cards. Thin patterns rattled in the wind. Those who could sew set to work. Neighbors, getting news of the emergency, came in to help with buttonholes. They measured, cut, pinned and unpinned—and talked. I was stood on a table while the dresses were being tried on. The cold scissors clicked around my neck and armholes, as I shifted from foot to foot. Lengths for hems were decided upon but never that I can remember abided by, for the kernel of my mother's philosophy about clothes was, "Better be too large than too small." She took the scissors from my neck in order the better to point out the gingham secret which had been handed down from generation to generation: "Gingham, you know, shrinks when it's washed."

Then followed a chorus of experiences, arias in gingham. "Yes, it shrinks when it's washed."

"Oh, indeed it shrinks when it's washed."

Solos, trios, quartettes, floated out into the spring morning, I standing the while, waiting to be unpinned. My mother finally began to remove the pins, holding them in her mouth for safe keeping. She shifted them skilfully, thus freeing half of her mouth for the repetition of the monotonous refrain, now intoned with a tight-lipped nasal blur—"ITWILLSHRINKWHENITSWASHED." "Itwillshrinkwhenitswashed." The voices sounded farther and farther away, droning, buzzing. Hours seemed to fly by. "She will grow, too," I overheard. I felt myself growing; my clothes were shrinking. My personality seemed suddenly to have no fixed bounds. I was no longer a separate entity, but was merged in the institution of spring sewing. I had become the symbol of the new spirit, done in gingham.

However, I felt quite repaid and well attired when I climbed into the buggy, took my seat on a box, and leaned back in state against the dashboard, waving good-bye to the friendly assemblage that had gathered to see us off. My mother, I noticed, had disappeared. Then I remembered. When any of us went away for any length of time she always put on a bonnet and retired to a back room to weep.

This rite had not before been observed in my honor. I felt sad but prominent.

My father tapped the horse with his whip and fell into an eleven-mile theological discourse with my sister. Certain phrases fell into the meter of his Sunday sermons and mingled unintelligibly with the spring formula in my mind, "Youmustfleefrom-thewrathtocome," "Itwillshrinkwhenitswashed," "Changedinthetwinklingofaneye."

When we arrived in the town and I stepped beyond the precincts of my known world, I became uneasy. My dress was longer than any that I saw. Even my sister became aware of a certain ungainliness in my appearance, addressing me with open sympathy. "Let me turn back your cuffs. They seem a little long yet, but you know—"

"Yes I know," I interrupted her quickly, for I could not bear to hear it again, not yet.

"Let's go for a walk," she suggested.

But how could I go abroad in that dress before it had shrunk? "No," I said, drooping dramatically in my seat. "I'm tired. I suppose it's the measles!"

With a touch of that comparative slant that the traveler slips into so easily, I wondered about this town in which we were waiting for the train and the one to which we were going. Would my clothes be understood before they shrank? Was the gingham

formula in vogue in these metropolises, or was it a local term, peculiar only to our neighborhood? I did not know. I do not yet know.

PART II

Those Hard Years of Middle Youth

On Being Told, "That Will Never Be Noticed"

BEING told "That will never be noticed" is one of the occasions of life that deserves real and widespread sympathy. This remark always takes one at a disadvantage, for it is made in those years before one has collected enough data to refute it, before one has learned the art of meeting social discomfiture gallantly.

How open to disaster are the years when hems are being let down! With tears a girl stood watching her mother lengthening the hem of a school dress. The new stretch of unfaded material was in her eyes an immense expanse. Surely she could not be expected to wear that! But her mother resourcefully bridged the gap between the old and the new with white braid, tried the dress on her daughter and announced triumphantly, "There! that will never be noticed."

What was she to do when all grown-up authority was arrayed against her? for all the aunts in concert announced, "No, that will never in the world be noticed." This girl did not then know that it is the habit of people to use their most convincing tones when they are least assured. She knew only that it

would be noticed. I need hardly relate the sad sequel to this story. There came the day when she could not escape wearing the dress to school. Whenever she was forced to make any excursion from her desk, that terrible hem and the tell-tale braid protruded in every direction. Would it not be a lesser calamity to miss one's spelling than to suffer the humiliation of going up to the dictionary? If mothers and aunts only knew how they have retarded the intellectual progress of the young! On the street, too, everyone seemed to stare at the hem. However swiftly she went, she could not evade the public gaze.

I myself once had a choice grey hat with a plush top and a stiff brim, fluted like sheet-iron roofing. I liked the hat, in fact, I had gone to town with my father to select it, while he was exchanging some butter for groceries. I had made the money myself to buy the hat, a fact which added zest to my purchase. It is true that it did not match anything else that I had in my scant wardrobe but the brim was beautiful in my eyes. I wore it on Sundays with the greatest pride. But on a fateful day as I was leaving the church it blew off of my head. I ran to get it. Our dog, seeing me running, thought that I was playing some kind of game with him and he ran also, reaching the hat first. He chewed it and pawed it, hastening ever beyond my reach. I wept because I thought I should never get to wear the hat again, though later I was to

weep because I *would* have to wear it. My mother took it and resuscitated it, from her point of view, put it on my head and with a sense of satisfaction declared: "There, that will never be noticed on a galloping horse!"

Yet, did not I know? Would not all my father's congregation stare at it as I walked up the aisle? Alas, I must walk and not gallop, being the minister's child! Would they not see that the lovely flutes were in disarray, that the spirit of it was broken? Would not the whole Sunday school notice that the plush top had been shorn of all elegance? Besides, half of the Sunday school had helped me chase the hat. I did not argue about it, for I realized even then the finality of that remark; but I adopted the plan of carrying the mortal remains in my hand when in attendance upon the Sunday school, slinging it carelessly, as if it were the custom in winter to take one's hat thus in one's hand.

Elders will always, I think, take this firm stand in regard to the disabled apparel of youth. I do not advocate rebellion; forces are too scattered. I do not advise the healing balm of humor, for at that time the situation cannot be viewed humorously. Adults no doubt have their own reasons for letting down hems and straightening hat brims that are awry and for standing by their respective works of rehabilitation, which it is well not to go into. One may beseech

the universe to make one less visible, wear a coat over the dress if it is even remotely the season for coats, or carry a hat, or back out of a situation if the darned run is in the rear of one's stocking; but withal one must rely chiefly upon cultivating a sustaining philosophy, knowing that all girls of all ages are told this, knowing that one will probably pass it down to one's daughters, who will relay it on in triumph.

On Organizing One's First Club

ONE has to have organized a club before she is at home in this associative age; has to have poured forth her soul in constitutions, her fortune into running expenses. From the beginning, this institution of the heart must supply the one thing that the age stands in need of, whether it be the encouragement of the eating of peanuts or the propagation of revolt. The actual operation of the club plunges one into a happy purposefulness, while a survey of the benefits which the future will derive from one's efforts provides one with a theme for endless contemplation. Incongruous in purpose it may be, clashing in activity, but is it not one's own?

What purpose could have been more satisfactory, a youth ago, than the one assumed in the Lend-a-Hand-to-the-Miserable Club? In the breasts of its founders surged the desire to be a benefit to mankind; in their midst was a member with a carriage and horses at her command. Their first step was to elect the member with the carriage president; the second, to embark in the carriage. But as they drove gaily about the town in the presidential equipage, their consciences smote them. To what end were they rid-

ing? Surely it should not be for the mere pleasure of the membership? How to extend the helping hand while still *en route* became the problem of the hour.

But inspiration cannot long evade a group in such dire need of a suitable objective. In the course of their journeys they met an old couple who were quite obviously in need of a better home. *This* should be the end for which they were organized—to find more pleasant quarters for this deserving pair.

In the pursuance of this aim the club flourished, not a street being left uninvestigated; but, alas, morale began to slacken when the old people refused to be moved, preferring their own sad hovel to the beautiful one which the club had found "For Rent." What can a club do but disband when the miserable refuse to grasp the hand extended for their rehabilitation? What but turn its back on the salvation of the needy and drown incipient cynicism in the more rewarding satisfactions of bridge?

But not all clubs of youth are philanthrophic in aim. Some have been instituted to enlarge the experience of the participating individuals. In the time when cigarettes were first emerging as a feminine pastime, three girls met in private session in a barn to organize the Smoking Club. The two fifth-grade members agreed to the elevation of Katie, the third-

grade member, to the presidency because it was her barn and, in addition, she had the only cigarette case, the item which had precipitated the society. Being true to the purpose for which they were organized, they restricted their activities to smoking, though cedar bark was the only smokable substance which they could secure. To prevent their mothers from detecting tobacco on their breath, the club provided onions and lemons.

The great moment of the organization arrived when the program committee procured a package of real cigarettes. They smoked nonchalantly, as becomes the members of a smoking club. But in the fulfilment of their purpose lay the seeds of disintegration. The membership went reeling home; the very foundations of the order rocked. Before the week had ended, the society fell into innocuous desuetude.

But of all the organized adventures of adolescence, the one to which I should prefer to ally myself is *The Rustic Club*. It is not its long membership roll that forces me into this decision, for it had but two active members, "Frank"* and Mary Willard; nor its commodious headquarters, as it was housed in the bleak confines of an attic on a Wisconsin farm. It is the purpose of this club which has immortalized it in my eyes. The constitution of the Rustic Club an-

* Later to be somewhat more widely known as Frances E.!

nounced: "The object of these meetings is to relate any anecdote that pertains to hunting, in any of its branches; tell what great things we have done ourselves, or that Oliver or Loren or the Hodge boys have, or Daniel Boone or anybody else."

Is not this an inimitable rendering of the matter—to "tell what great things we have done ourselves"? What club can succeed that does not include this as a membership privilege; what one could fail that offered it? To be wise enough in one's early teens to provide in a constitution for this final satisfaction of recounting one's own worthy adventures before a sympathetic group of assembled hunters—is not this genius incarnate? Of course if there is time the group will get on to the achievements of Daniel Boone and other great hunters, but principally we are met to tell what great things we ourselves have done.

Not only was their club unique in purpose but it was also wise in execution, as the following excerpts from their constitution will show:

> "There shall always be something good to eat and the president shall look after this matter, in return for which she shall have the seat of honor, and make the first speech, etc. She shall also get the things ready when the Club goes on an excursion; shall see that the dog is haltered

and take a little food along for him as well as for the rest; shall get the gun ready and the box in which things are carried.

"Because it is hard work, the members shall take turn once a week at being president."

To all members of any age the wisdom of this method is obvious. So much emphasis is placed on honest returns for work, so little is dependent on prestige of possessions. Compare with this the elevation of Katie to the presidency of the Smoking Club, Katie who owned both the cigarette case and the barn; or the selection of the member who had the carriage for the presiding officer of the Lend-a-Hand-to-the-Miserable Club. Had the Willards had experience with presidents who owned carriages and barns, or was this but the outcropping of organizational acumen?

But there were compensations for the president, ill-used as she might sometimes think herself. It must have been a satisfaction for her to have it recognized in the constitution that the president led a hard life. Also, the following week, she could be the membership, with no responsibility toward getting the food and the gun ready. She could criticize the manner in which the new president haltered the dog, could say how she did it when she was president. In fact, every other week she could be the membership, could rise and say, "Madam president, the member-

ship feels," or "objects," or "is unanimous in its desire." Life in such an organization would be enjoyable, whether one were an official or a layman.

Notable indeed is one's first wild fling into a purposeful society!

On Coming to Fractions

"BUT just wait till you come to fractions," they all said at school when I boasted of being able to multiply anything. "You'll have something to work on then!"

In study periods I turned to the section marked "Fractions" and tried to read it. They were right, I could understand nothing. "Numerators" and "denominators" terrified me. Would only the boys be able to "do fractions"? Would I be in disgrace? While this disastrous time was yet far in the future I selected an inconspicuous side blackboard where I should go the first morning of "fractions." Though the day approached slowly, it crept ever nearer, page by page.

Now it happened, one afternoon while I was still basking in the care-free zone of long division, with the fearful season yet two weeks off, that a problem did not come out even. I was sure that I had multiplied and divided correctly but I always had a "1" left over. I went to a sister for explanation. She, knowing nothing of my state of mind in regard to this bugbear of arithmetic, said casually, "Oh, that's just a fraction left over." Seized with terror, I did not

try to understand but plunged into grief. We had come to fractions!

"What *is* the matter with you?" she asked in consternation.

"It isn't fair," I managed to explain. "We haven't come to fractions yet. We're still in long division. They haven't any right!"

"But you need only to put '¼' in your answer."

"Yes, but '¼' is a fraction and it's not fair. It's two weeks till fractions."

Other members of the family tried to show me the harmlessness of this awful specter that had arisen but I would not be convinced. Seeing the uselessness of exposition, they finally gave me over to grief. I wept, as I remember, until supper time.

It was a chastened and rebellious spirit that swung a school bucket down the road the following morning. I was willing to compromise with the universe and accept the premature arrival of "fractions," but how could one ever count on any security if bridges which one was preparing with some trepidation to cross in the future, were going to develop the disconcerting habit of transplanting themselves and appearing at their discretion beneath one's feet?

On Having Decided That You Will Some Day Be Famous

YOU had little idea in the beginning as to what you would be famous about but that was of little consequence. You would leave that to the future, for it was not your responsibility. Had you not done enough when you had thought up the idea? Something would present itself, you would do it and become widely known. Strangers would recognize you when you passed, turn and exclaim, "Oh, that's Winifred Wilson! She's the one you know, who . . . . . ." Personally, I never lingered to hear their explanations. Their words trailed off into misty regions of proud achievement. It was more satisfactory not to be restricted to any one field of eminence. It was enough to be recognized as a person of note.

For some time these generalities loaf vaguely in the mind. No effort is made to substantiate your dreams, till a day of awakening comes when you suddenly realize that time is swiftly passing and fame has not called. You are nothing to the general public but "one of the Wilson girls." You feel that you ought to begin to take your career in hand. This is

a difficult period, for one cannot always, thus early, locate quickly one's most outstanding talent. How can one know whether it is to be singing, speaking, writing, philanthropy, wealth, nursing, or travel?

One sometimes decides to become a great speaker. In this case you retire to some unfrequented space, barn or woodshed, attic or cellar, and begin to practise. It falls to reason that the sooner you begin, the sooner you will arrive. To have fame overtake one in youth has a peculiar poignancy about it that inspires one to endure rigorous discipline. So, you set about rehearsing your speeches. The tremendous audience rises before you, they lift their faces expectantly. "So young, too," they murmur. But what will be your message? You cast about in your mind for a theme but all seem too commonplace. Since you cannot think of a sufficiently worthy title, you conclude that it would be better not to begin with a grand speech—you will approach your career more modestly. You have just chosen a subject when a family voice echoes discordantly through your audience: "Oh, *Win*ifred!"

When they call you that way it is sure to be uninteresting. You try to ignore it. Does not one owe something to one's waiting audience? "Oh, *Win*ifred!" the voice comes again. "Would you mind keeping the baby while I go over to Mrs. Jackson's?" You do mind, of course. In any *real*

audience a baby is a liability, but to an imaginary convocation it is death. One can seldom rehearse with success when any member of one's immediate family is among the spectators, for they prick one's sense of mission, are devastating to the tone of the performance. So you wisely dismiss the expectant faces. But you go disconsolately. If you are not famous it will be other people's fault.

Or perhaps you choose to become well known through books that you will write. If so, there is the day when you attire yourself in your favorite dress and withdraw to some select spot to begin your first work. How impressed would people be if they knew! but you have told no one. It takes some time to get seated. Then the point of your pencil breaks. People who sit down to write their first book ought to have fortified themselves behind many well-sharpened pencils, for it is just by such petty distractions that great works are thwarted. It is so difficult to get back again into the spirit of creative enthusiasm.

If you do survive this initial rebuff, you begin to list the possible subjects for your pen:

Number I.————————

Number II.————————

But for a discouraging length of time no subjects flow. Then "The Story of My Own Life" occurs to you. It looks well in writing. Just what are the

distinguishing features of your life, you ponder. You feel a great difference between yourself and others but how does one say it? Getting one's self born on paper is a more difficult feat than it at first appears. Shall you say, I was born *in* or born *at*. Or why not leave it out altogether; just refer to it casually in a later chapter? This point becomes so involved that you abandon the field of autobiography altogether and turn to the safer realm of fiction.

It will be a story about a poor family, a large family so that you can use all of your favorite names; besides, all poor families are large. It will make the story longer, too, to have lots of characters. You warm to your theme, get everyone labeled. You are so glad that you decided on fiction, it simplifies the situation so. If your family, reading it, should be skeptical about any part, you can simply say, "But it's fiction, you see." You pause a moment before this vision of your assembled family, lost in the depths of your story. Even the brothers read respectfully. At last, they will be proud of you and sorry that they were not more attentive to your wishes.

But just as you get your characters ready to have things begin to happen to them, a family voice calls again, "Wini*fred*, have you finished your homework yet?" Homework! What was homework? Were you not trying to begin to get famous? For some

moments you seek to live above such ordinary considerations as grammar and history and family interference but the charm is broken. You decide to stop to get a drink, a decision which proves absolutely fatal to your dazzling career. How are you ever to become famous if your family doesn't cooperate?

On the Occasion of Wishing You Had Been Someone Else

"OH, why was I ever I?" one laments from bottomless depths of gloom. "Why weren't my eyes brown, and my nose straight? Why isn't our house. . . ." Thus do the queries splash into utterance after a long struggle through a torrent of tears. "If *only* I had been someone else, everything would have been different!" A very correct statement, this latter. One could not be both the only daughter of a successful pirate and the sixth son of a farmer in Iowa. If one had been born at sea on a whaling vessel instead of the daughter of a street-car conductor in Kansas, everything would have been different!

If only one could realize at these dissatisfied moments how one is one's self only by the merest chance, what possibilities this occasion would offer! If I had known when I first asked the question, "Why was I ever I?" that I am myself only because of a torn pocket in a coat, how differently I might have looked upon this occasion.

A torn pocket in a coat! It happened in this way:

A young man, riding on a roan horse, followed

a covered-wagon that was going down into Texas. He was tall, with bushy curly hair and brown eyes. He would marry the girl who was driving the wagon ahead, he believed, so he patiently trailed the westbound campers, sometimes tying his horse to the rear of her wagon and assisting with the driving. But one day the rider and the girl of the wagon quarreled. She sent him away. When she saw no longer the white face of his horse following and heard no more his call to her unwieldy oxen, she regretted her rashness and wrote him a letter which, she was certain, would bring him back again. The days passed and he did not return. She was too proud to write to him again. After awhile she married another, and there were all nine of us.

A long time afterward she found an old coat of her uncle's, ran her hand down into the pockets, down through a torn lining, and touched a letter—her letter written so hopefully when she was sixteen. She must have looked with some surprise at that moment upon the blue-eyed rows of us, standing about her as so many indisputable facts!

While the winds of chance were sweeping the prospects of unborn Texans hither and thither, other forces were side-tracking the fate of future New Englanders. A few years before my future was settled by that untidy lining, the noble call of academic aspiration was tampering with the existence of

certain of my contemporaries. On the morning after a late evening session with Nehemiah, the hero of her choice, a young woman came down to breakfast in Massachusetts to find at her plate this verse which her father had produced in the troubled night watches.

If you do not aspire
To anything higher
Than to be a companion
For Nehemiah,
I do not intend
Much more to expend
To fit your mind
For some higher end.

This true daughter of New England, shivering on the brink of matrimonial disaster, resolved to save herself from the pitfall of sinful ignorance, discarded Nehemiah with dispatch, chose Mt. Holyoke instead, and another great-grandfather for her great-grandchildren, thus throwing the second and third and fourth generations into a different mold.

Nehemiah's life, Nehemiah's wife's life, her own life, and that of the great-grandfather of her great-grandchildren, were all affected, as well as their children, their children's children, and their children's children's children. That is as far as it has gone.

* * *

If for the observance of this occasion I might have had that faded daguerreotype of a dark man who followed on a roan horse, how my imagination would have been stimulated, but it was lost long ago in the frequent movings of a circuit rider's family. Perhaps it is better to have had it lost, for I should have then missed my chance of plumbing the depths of adolescent despair.

On Monday Mornings

PERSONALLY, I never approved of Monday; it was one of the weekly catastrophes of my youth. I waked on this dull morning, half hoping to find some contagious disease raging; but there was seldom little help from this quarter, for the community was always disappointingly healthy. Certain enterprising youths of another village once took the matter into their own hands, I understand, and substantially aided the ravaging disease of pink-eye. I hesitate to be more specific at this point because of my desire not to interfere with the promotion of learning. I shall just state, therefore, that they discovered some innocuous liquid which, when injected into the eye, effected the desired discoloration. School was hastily dismissed and Monday had no terrors until the medical profession of the village began an investigation of this peculiar disability, so contagious only within a certain gang. Oh, that our school could have boasted of pupils so aggressive in the cause of leisure! But Monday in our town was always preserved inviolate by the authorities.

Saturday and Sunday attire interferes with the dress routine of the week; new clothes have to be

assembled. Monday morning becomes an exercise in opening and shutting drawers and closets, punctuated with such queries as, "Who knows where my blue tie has gone to?" No one knows, so you resort to another color scheme.

Saturday and Sunday leisure interferes with one's mid-week determination to become the world's best speller, to know the multiplication table better than anyone else in one's room, to know the dates of all battles, together with the names of the commanders on each side. All of these neglected ambitions have to be reassembled, together with books, tablets and pencils.

Tuesday is usually quite satisfactory. One can wear what one wore on Monday, if no ink was spilled. By that time one has re-established in his family his claim to pencils and tablets, and is again deeply immersed in the pleasures of being educated. But Monday morning is the problem that should be taken under consideration by the school authorities and the mayors of cities and towns. Why could not a whistle be blown at nine to give the signal to all school-goers to collect their lost raiment; two whistles at ten to send them in search of lost school equipment, give time for legal proceedings in regard to the disputed ownership of all property; three whistles at eleven to set them seeking for their lost ambitions? At twelve the school-bell could sound

as usual for lunch. One o'clock would see everyone assembled, collected in body, in spirit and in pencils. The only hope of reclaiming Monday morning lies in avoiding it altogether.

This happy method of receiving the occasion of Monday morning is, I realize, too advanced for this century in which we live. Until it can be evaded entirely, not a great deal can be done about it. One may accept it with true industry, falling vigorously into the wash-day spirit, or one may rebel altogether and order one's breakfast in bed for Monday!

On Discovering the Usefulness of the Words, "Just Let Me Finish This Paragraph"

IN these words lie the seeds of great possibility for those whose time is still at the disposition of their elders. Herein is found one of the most successful methods of evading, at least for a season, the arbitrary forces that overpower one in youth. It offers protection against errand-running, studying, having to change one's clothes, going to bed on time, and other superimposed activities for which one's soul has no affinity.

If it had done no other service to youth than that of securing a reprieve at bedtime, does it not justify its place in the high annals of younger generations? No other statement can approach it in effectiveness. If, when the hour for retiring has struck, you say, "That clock's fast," you gain nothing, for the latent argument in this ruse arouses opposition. No adult will permit his timepiece to be called in question with impunity. If he is ever forced to entertain a suspicion of its accuracy, he does so in such a grudging manner that it bodes you and your projects no good. Or if you at this point explain that Tom stayed up late last night, your cause is not advanced. Even

you yourself may recognize that the underlying motive here is weak, and you soon give it up. The courtesy of delaying is not extended to you.

But "Just let me finish this paragraph!" is conciliatory in tone and effective in result. One's parents seldom object. They look with secret pride upon you, rejoicing that they have a son or daughter with such a bent for reading. If you play your part well, a momentary glamour enfolds you, causing them to forget their original request. It is usually some time before they return to the subject under consideration; for, of course, they are interested in their own paragraphs.

Though the advantage gained in time may be slight, yet the pleasure derived from these moments is out of all proportion to their length. Hours of daylight leisure cannot compare with this interim. With the expertness of an epicure you taste the delights of the fleeting seconds.

This is but a temporary expedient, it must be admitted; but having to go to bed early is also a transitory phase of existence. Soon the night will come when one may stay up as long as one wishes, when one must even retire later than one chooses—but this reversal of circumstance is irrelevant to the occasion in hand. I only wish to commemorate here that delightful respite gained by literary strategy. If all

the moments thus retrieved in youth could be added together, how great would be the sum of them, how concentrated the joy!

On Having to Change One's Dress

I SHOULD like to have been present when this occasion first sprouted in the mind of a circumspect mother. Having never been subjected to the inconveniences of this system in youth, she was probably impressed with the contribution which she had made to mothers, especially those who had large families.

In the transition period between the ante-apparel and the post-apparel era, when clothes had not yet been quite accepted as a full-time necessity by the more conservative, this occasion no doubt emerged in a rudimentary form. Daughters were not admonished to change their dress but simply to take off their festival garland. Even when the machinery of compliance was so simple, there was doubtless some rebellion, for a girl's objection is not due merely to the inconvenience involved but also to the deflation of spirit caused by having to part with pleasing apparel, though it be but a prehistoric suggestion of an elegant feather ruffle or a becoming gesture in fur. Later, when clothes had become the accepted custom, mothers, no doubt, propagated this occasion with renewed vigor, hurrying their daughters in from

the ceremonial dances to exchange their striking costumes for those whose glories were long since faded.

There was nothing for daughters to do but to begin inventing methods whereby they could evade this ignominy. That first daughter no doubt clung protestingly to her primitive finery, insisting that it was not her chief ambition to deluge it with cocoanut juice, nor to mop up the cave with it. She dallied for time, I suspect, and sought to divert her mother by various ruses. This habit comes too naturally today to the young of the human species to believe that it has been recently acquired.

Perhaps girls of that ancient time always cherished the hope that no one would notice their omission to comply with the regulation. This form of negative intrigue is still effective unless there are those in the family who find it to their interests to call attention to the matter. A brother is the most serious obstacle to success in this attempt. He has a way of remarking solicitously just before Sunday dinner, "Anne forgot to change her dress." But let me insert at this point a word of vindication for brothers. If he himself went to the trouble of wearing his corduroys to Sunday school, under his best suit, in order to hasten the process of disrobing later, is he to sit by and see Anne escape, scotfree? Had he endured the discomfort, the jests, for naught?

If this occasion were a government regulation and not an alternative among mothers, many undesirable elements in the situation would be removed. Just after school in the afternoon all girls would be changing their dresses. It would not consume much time. No one would have to wait for anyone else while she was getting into other clothes, for all would be impeded by the same cause. There would be a common after-school status which would be generally accepted. It is when you have to change your dress and "Marion doesn't" that you feel the inequalities of justice. It does not help the situation any to be reminded that laundry problems in Marion's family are very simple as compared to that of your family. The joy of being one of a large family is irrelevant consolation.

But there seems at present no reason to hope that legislators will attack this problem. In the absence of such public action, evasion seems the only method of dealing with the situation. Yet this is not fully satisfactory, for with the rise of intelligence in mothers, the price of evasion is becoming exorbitant. After some experimenting many girls have had to admit that the maneuvering required to avoid changing one's dress is often as much trouble as changing it. What energy has been wasted between Monday and Friday in contriving methods of escape! Many

a girl has given up in despair and has become an example among mothers in the neighborhood, a cause for sorrow among daughters.

On the Occasion of Having Simply Nothing to Wear

THERE comes a morning when you know that it is useless to arise, for you remember that you have nothing to put on. You think half-heartedly of getting up and looking in the closet, but what's the use? You make a mental inventory of the contents of your chiffonier, but you know before you begin that it contains nothing of interest. You sit up, gaze out of the window, lie down again, and call, "*Moth*er!"

"What is it?"

"I have simply nothing to wear!"

"What's the matter with the dress that you wore yesterday?"

"I got ink on it!"

"What about your blue wool?"

"We have cooking today and I just roast when I have that on."

"There's your middy and skirt."

"The collar of that middy does so funny. It doesn't act like anybody else's. It hikes up in the back."

By this conversation you have almost convinced

yourself that there is no use in getting out into a clothes-wearing world, though you realize that there are two possibilities that have not yet been referred to, for the time for mentioning them has not quite arrived. Your mother will mention one and you the other.

At this point she comes in, makes a very practical survey, and produces the very dress that you knew she would find, inquiring, "What's the matter with this dress?"

"I don't know, but I just don't feel right in it." Then you produce the idea that you had rather thought of all along, "Why can't I wear that green one?"

"You know very well. . . ."

In time you find yourself in *that* dress, as you knew you would, eventually. Breakfast is not a very happy occasion. Brothers often have such poor taste in table conversation at this time of the day. One of them generally asks, with ill-concealed suspicion, "What's the matter with school? Exams? Arithmetic?" Your answer depends partly on the state of your feelings, for you may not wish to discuss the condition of your wardrobe with a world that understands you so little, and partly on the age of the brother so inquiring. If he is older, you pursue a more subtle line of retaliation; but if he is younger,

you employ no ingenuity but resort to a staple form of reply that follows neither the principles of logic nor the art of discrimination. You may say, somewhat aloof, "No, there are no exams. Anyway, my report card was better than yours." The brother makes the form retort, "Well, anyway, I'm not fat." Or perhaps, "Well, anyway, I don't have red hair!" Adult intervention usually changes the belligerent trend of affairs here, so you are relieved of further exertion.

You finally get off to school in *that* dress. On this day you see all the people whom you did not wish to see but whom you always do meet when you are not dressed just right. It is on this day that a new girl or boy is likely to visit or enter school. You feel that you should explain that this is your "worst dress." You do so hope the laundry is done, so that you can wear your pink one tomorrow.

This is an occasion that lingers surprisingly late, though afterward one cannot get so much satisfaction out of blaming it on the clothes one does not have as one did in one's teens. There are those who intimate that this occasion is dependent entirely on one's state of mind, but I am one who maintains that the state of one's wardrobe has *something* to do with it, for there was my pink chambray dress scorched in the very front of the skirt; and that panel of soup,

designed by a dining car artist on an only dress—such disasters are not mental. Why do people always blame things on one's disposition?

On the Occasion of a Brother's First Date

I HAVE never known a brother to announce openly his first date but it usually leaks out somehow. One would think that a boy could succeed in keeping the matter secret from his family, but he seldom escapes detection, for his very awkwardness and desire for secrecy betray him. A week ahead of time he begins to inquire, "Who is going to use the car on Friday night?" He tries to speak casually, as he has done before, but an air of mystery hovers over every word. From the uneasiness he displays one might think that he was preparing to rob a bank. It might be less difficult to carry through a robbery.

"And, mother, if you don't mind, will you see that that white shirt of mine gets into the laundry?" This simple request booms forth through the house far too importantly. Even the scrubbing of his hands arouses suspicion, which is heightened as he presses his suit of his own accord. When he washes the car without being asked, he might as well admit that a cataclysmic event is about to happen.

"Mother, what is the matter with John?" you ask.

"Why, has John done anything out of the ordi-

nary?" she inquires in that general fashion which she sometimes adopts.

"Has John *done* anything? Didn't he come and borrow my face cream last night, and this morning I found him looking in the mirror. You know that he has only used his mirror to hang his fishing tackle on up to now."

"He does seem to be giving more attention to his appearance lately, doesn't he," she adds non-committally.

"Yes, mother, but what I want to know is—what's the matter?"

No diagnosis of John's case seems forthcoming, so you continue the investigation unaided.

You begin to make inquiries at school and join clusters of talkers here and there. Everybody is talking about the junior-senior banquet and you learn the news—John is taking Madge Adams to the banquet. You look over at John in a new light. He does look cleaner. You glance at Madge. . . . You wonder. . . . But the bell rings. . . .

After school you hurry home to tell mother. She *will* be surprised! "Mother, John has a date with Madge Adams!"

"So, it's Madge Adams? Well, she is a very nice girl."

"She isn't very good in history. But *John*, mother! Did you ever think he would notice a girl?"

"Why, I rather thought that he would, sometime."

"If he married her I'd have to have a new dress for the wedding of course. I think it ought to be blue."

"I don't believe that you will need your new dress right away. Also, it might be well for you to learn in the beginning that it is not safe to speculate very far in advance about the girls whom your brothers may marry."

John was relieved that at last the facts were known. Events moved swiftly. At length he stood before the family for inspection.

"Did you get the handkerchief that I laid out for you?" mother inquires in that voice with which she gets people off to functions of importance.

"Yes, I found it, thanks." He wishes to go but does not know just how to do it. Perhaps, too, he does not care to hasten to that doorbell that he will have to ring.

Billy at this point has a brilliant idea and immediately announces it, "Hello, Madge Adams!"

"If you call me that again you'll find yourself in the middle of next week!" John makes a dive at Billy but remembers that his tie looked just right and that he had better be careful. The dog barks as if it were all staged for his benefit. A normal atmosphere having been restored by this uproar, John is himself again and moves toward the door.

"Here's some change," father adds. "You might get out of gas."

"No danger of that," Billy shouts in; "he has enough to fly to Paris. Gosh, but the car is slicked up!"

John departs.

At school the next week you find it rather pleasant to bring John into the conversation. "He's going with the girls now," you announce casually.

On Having One's Diary Read by a Brother

ONE does not know in the beginning how dangerous it is to entrust secret thoughts to written words. The tendency of hidden things to come to light at inappropriate moments is a fact which one learns by experience. Therefore one indulges without restraint in the satisfaction of freely transcribing the innermost emotions to the pages of a composition book.

Many girls escape the disaster of public revelation. I know of one who was very successful in concealing the record of her stormy moments—and she had a brother, too. Confiding her feelings to small slips of paper, she stuffed them into the hollow legs of a bamboo bookcase until it all but overflowed with private information of various kinds; lists of "People Whom I Like and Why," "People Whom I Hate and Why," "People Whom I Think Are Interesting and Why." The bookcase was later sold to a second-hand store, lists and all. So far as she knows, it has never divulged a single secret committed to its care.

But not every girl is so fortunate. It is generally the fate of a diary to be found and read by an unscrupulous brother. He does not, of course, state

that he has read it, but he begins to quote a phrase that makes her suspicious, and then a sentence that makes her furious. She rushes in search of it to find that it is not in the place where she had put it. Then this occasion begins.

Dissolved in mad tears she calls, "Mother!" The latter hastens in, to see what catastrophe has now befallen the house. She finds an incoherent and semiliquid mass which demands to know why she ever had Billy anyway, a query which is followed by the more general statement that *her* children are never going to have any brothers! Having by this decision somewhat avenged herself against brothers as a species, the author of the diary recovers enough to explain that Billy will hasten to tell the whole room at school and that she can never, never go back there again.

The mother meets this devastating situation by announcing that supper is ready and that she should get up and wash her face. Supper! How can one eat in so cruel a world? Why not starve now and end it all? Then the family will be sorry and Billy completely frustrated. What will such information avail him when her pale—but she remembers at this point that they are having chocolate pudding for dessert. She decides to wait till tomorrow to begin to starve.

Father enters, enters as if her world had not been

blown into bits. How can he! As the family is being seated at table he glances at his daughter's swollen eyes and inquires what the trouble is, as casually as if he were asking why there was no salt on the table. What's the use explaining since her revenge has already been decided upon? Besides, he could do nothing to keep Billy from telling eventually.

"Oh, nothing," she answers.

This statement comes as a surprise to Billy who, seeing that parental intervention has been rejected, is sure that she means to resort to strategy. He looks quickly at her with a touch of suspicious hostility that arouses all of her tactical sense. At the same time he hastily probes into his own not irreproachable past. Qualms of guilt seep into his countenance.

What unpunished transgression was weighing on Billy's mind she did not know; but she was willing to gamble broadly on his past indiscretions.

"Nothing at all," she repeats quite cheerfully. "I have a little headache."

Though this explanation comes as a surprise to her mother, it is a relief to her to have the affair settled so peacefully.

Billy is now thoroughly alert. What is she up to? Girls were queer, anyway. Why did they write things down in books if they did not want them read! How could anybody like *Jack!*

She, having by now entirely given up the satisfaction to be derived from starving, vied with him in the matter of second helpings.

Father was doing the talking now, was making some remarks about Mr. Perkins's orange grove. Some of his best trees had been stripped of fruit, he had heard. He wanted to know— A confusion began to spread over the countenance of Billy which needed no interpretation, to her.

So! Billy had been in on that! She looked at him swiftly. Their glances met in silent, though perchance temporary integration.

When There's Just Nothing to Do!

AFTER a little practice you begin to recognize the day of this occasion from afar. It comes over the hill wearing a drab dress that sags in the back. Taking off its hat drearily, it announces, "My dear, your slip shows two inches on the side." You have just finished adjusting the slip when it remarks, "And you have a run in your stocking, did you know?" As if this were not enough, it goes garrulously on, getting under your feet in an unpleasant way. "You didn't do very well in your algebra exam yesterday, did you? And this is the day for Oral English!" Even before breakfast, you can tell that this day is the kind that will linger exasperatingly, will never know how to say good-night.

It might be better if you could keep your thoughts to yourself, but you cannot. By afternoon you announce disconsolately to space, hoping, of course, that some of the family will hear, "There's just *nothing* to do!" But you get no sympathy; only throw yourself open to a volley of industrious suggestions.

"Why don't you finish the pillows for your room?"

"Oh, I don't want to finish anything I ever began!"

"Why not call up Annabel and ask her to come over?"

"She wouldn't be at home!" Half to prove that there's no use calling her, half hoping that you will find her, you ring. She is out of town. "That's just the way it is! I wish *I* were off on a visit."

"Why don't you make a cake?"

"It's too hot."

The supply of suggestions is finally exhausted, for the family loses interest in your affairs. You catch sight of the clock. "Is it only four o'clock? I thought it must be six, surely. I wish something would happen. Nothing's happened for ages. I wish I'd get a letter from some one I never heard of before, or that somebody'd come who has never been here. The same things happen every day, the same people go by. If only Mr. Alexander would come by one day four and a half minutes late to lunch!"

You are fortunate if no one suggests, "I think, my dear, that the trouble is with yourself." It is queer how grown-up people always say this. You continue to sit on the edge of your chair, suspended in a sea of greyness. You try to recall yesterday and you find that you have lost it, cannot even remember it. Tomorrow seems to have strayed beyond reach.

There is nothing but this day, and it frankly does not interest you.

There are perhaps those who would say to you, "When I feel that way, I always . . ." Don't ever listen to such suggestions; they will be beside the point. I myself have found a method of entertaining this kind of day, but I know that hospitality, to be genuine, must reflect one's own personality, not that of another. Therefore I refrain from divulging my secret formula of behavior for this monotonous season.

Yet after much wide observation I have come to the conclusion that to this kind of day it is always safe to serve refreshments. To be specific, when there's just nothing else to do—eat. Eat popcorn, peanuts, grapes, bananas, cookies, peaches, ice cream, anything. This may not be ethical advice but it is efficacious. As you grow older, enlarge the menu and the number of participants. Tea may later be substituted for popcorn—tea and talk. More miracles are wrought by food than this world dreams of.

Whatever you do, do not let any one convince you that the day is at all related to your disposition. Tell them that it is a universally recognized occasion observed by all spirited individuals who for one reason or another are temporarily disinclined to exertion.

PART III

Before One Is Sixteen

On Staying Awake All Night

STAYING awake all night is one of the unreasonable rites of youth, viewed from the standpoint of elders. Those who wish to observe it should not try to prove its importance to skeptical adults, for the more they endeavor to explain it, the less convincing it appears. The people who do not by some immediate intuition divine the significance of this occasion will never by argument be won to include it among the necessary experiences of life.

Its very fascination lies chiefly in its just escaping the bounds of reason. Who desires at fourteen to lead a prudent life? Staying awake all night is one of the first rebellions against a past of judicious routine. Perhaps only those who are satiated with having to go to bed early can appreciate to the full this wild orgy of indiscretion.

Yet it is more than revolt. One has a curious desire to explore the night at first hand. There has always been a certain mystery attached to those who have watched through into the dawn with sick people. When neighbors came into our house and talked of past illnesses, their stories always reached a climax of interest when they said, "I never undressed all

night." One begins to suspect very early that the night has some secret which has been so far withheld. A personal investigation will alone satisfy one's curiosity.

The actual carrying out of this resolve is not without its compensations. Few regret having made the experiment; fewer still would repeat it. The shivery weirdness of noises, the echo of hurrying feet, the whistles and clocks that punctuate the night, the milk-man rattling his greeting at the back door of the early morning—these are things that one can never get second-hand. The accustomed objects of the living room assume a new aspect as one goes surreptitiously through the house in search of food. The light falls differently. A film of idleness covers busy chairs and tables. The strange inertia sensed in dreams seems to have laid hold of all inanimate things. Even a whisper thunders discordantly through the room which by day is filled with noise and laughter.

Talking all night lies at the very heart of this adventure. A sympathetic listener is therefore the chief essential for the observance of this occasion. I doubt if anyone ever stays awake all night until she finds her life history of consequence. Recounted thus in the darkness, unhurriedly, the simple dimensions of it expand till she sees herself as a very complicated and interesting person. There are inspired

flourishes never dreamed of in daylight hours. Ambitions are unfolded; careers are settled. Romance itself bends low.

It is true that a moment of disillusion comes at about four in the morning, when one seriously suspects that she was a fool to have thought she ever wanted to do this. A great hunger for sleep possesses one. The comfortable bed is just at hand. Whoever invented the idea anyway! If the explorer of the night engages long in this form of lamentation, she is lost. She will evolve in time into an adult who sees no use in such foolishness, who thinks that it is detrimental to a girl's health to lose so much sleep. But if she wins the struggle with sleep she will blot out from her mind all memory of her temporary faltering and face the dawn in triumph, feeling vastly superior to all who retired properly at ten.

When the world awakes she enters proudly into that high company of those who have neither slumbered nor slept.

On Doing Over Your Room

THIS occasion may delay its coming, but sooner or later it arrives, and usually without appointment. You do not in fact know that it has come until you hear yourself asking, "Why did I ever have my dresser in that corner?" Now it has always been in that corner but suddenly it can be there no longer. Without stopping to take off your hat you pull out the dresser and put it where the bed was—but where shall the bed go? When all the furniture is placed tentatively in the middle of the room, you catch sight of the pictures strung disconnectedly about the wall. To think that you once admired those! Some of them were not of your selection, of course, but why did you ever allow others to select your pictures! It is not *their* room.

Catching sight of yourself in the mirror you pause for a moment of self-examination. You do have a good nose and your eyes aren't bad, but your hair! You will never be able to overcome the handicap of such straight, stringy, colorless—in time, however, this process of self-inspection is brought to a close by the failing supply of derogatory adjectives.

Over your shoulder, the disheveled room stares

at you. You turn to survey the devastating results of your discontent. Yet even in the midst of the chaos there arises before you the dream of the room that you *would* have. Before your eyes in swift succession pass charming interiors—elegant oak chests from magazine advertisements, day-beds and dressing-tables from movie scenes, soft pillows shining beneath soft drop-lights. No room can ever come up to this moment of inspiration, for its colors do not exist, its pictures have not yet been painted; but it does not need to, for the dream is an entity in itself, an actual possession. Stray hints of it may float out in later suggestions but the original design you never exhibit to the outside world.

Some family voice usually disturbs your reverie, demanding to know what you are doing, a query which reminds you that you are doing over your room. This transition from the dream itself to its execution in curtains, furniture and paint is an important one, for in it you can antagonize or win the co-operation of your family, whose efforts in your behalf will mean success or failure to your enterprise. Brothers could be such an asset at this point but as a rule they generally show entire immunity to your enthusiasm. They hail your painting of the furniture with brotherly derision, your carpentry with manly contempt. Mothers, sisters and aunts are the only truly dependable allies.

There is one disappointment about doing over a room that might as well be faced in the beginning—there will be one thing that you will have to get on without, one most desirable thing. I have never known it to be otherwise. When a sister and I did over a room in white dotted Swiss and blue underdraperies, it was a rug that we could not have. I studied carefully the rug section of the mail-order catalogue. There it was in gorgeous color—"A really fine rug such as you have always wanted can now be yours at a price you can afford to pay." How did they know? I wondered. Trustfully I looked down at the price—sixty dollars! Our whole family could not have sixty dollars! Turning to other rugs, I read on: "A lovely creation in this serviceable rug at an amazingly low price. It will bring to your room the needed charm and originality." But it was no use. We could afford neither originality nor charm.

I do not know how dotted Swiss furniture with blue underdrapings can make one feel so at home in the universe. The trains came across the prairies just as they had come, making that strange design of a lighted cross on our north screen, but we no longer envied the travelers who hurried by. Dotted Swiss is a great sedative for the spirit when one is thirteen and "going on fourteen."

On First Staying in a Hotel

AS a child a hotel was for me a center of mystery. It was the only edifice in our town unknown to me. I had gone into every other building except this one, but warnings guarded its threshold. "Never go into the hotel," we were told and, "Do not accept candy from strangers." Thus was our curiosity multiplied. We must pass always on the far side of the street from it and had to imagine, therefore, what matters were transacted there. Strangers with candy in their pockets, perchance, strangers with derbies tilted back on their heads, sat on the narrow porch, talking and laughing, not about affairs of the town, of course, but of their own interesting past and of their life of travel and wide adventure. "Drummers," people called them. "Drummers," I said to myself as I gave them wide berth.

I knew that some day I should have to "stop at a hotel." How did one learn how to do it? Did a person just know without its being explained? I was afraid to ask, for everyone else seemed possessed of this information. But when anyone spoke of a hotel I listened with interest. "I met a drummer,"

one would say casually, "and he told me. . . ." I was amazed that they never seemed to say anything unusual.

Or someone would say, "I went into the hotel to settle. . . ." How did one "settle"? If only people would begin by saying what they did first, and then next, and next, it would be a great relief.

Hotels lost a certain amount of their mysterious quality, it is true, when a boy in the eighth grade stopped school, put on the hotel cap, and went to meet the trains. If he could help to run a hotel, I supposed that I might be able to stop at one. He had always failed in every study. But I still wondered what could be beyond the counter and the water-cooler with its script label, "Ice Water," which could be seen from the street.

I seldom go into a hotel now without recalling my first hotel adventure and the glow of excitement and fear with which I signed in that first register, thus enrolling my name in the book of world travelers who hasten hither and thither over the earth. Also, my own signature, done in my best handwriting, marked the adventure as mine and not another's. It was the first time that I had viewed myself thus objectively. How I wished that certain people at home could see me, yet at the same moment I was relieved that no one was there, for I might make unpardonable mistakes. A girl in our town had gone

to a hotel in a city and had pressed the fire-alarm button instead of the service bell. How chagrined one would be over such an experience.

Then I turned to survey the "lobby." A swift moment of disillusionment came to me. Some men sat dozing, with their derby hats pulled down over their eyes. Were these my drummers, my men of wide adventure? I looked up at the presiding deity at the desk; he was chewing gum in a disarming way. You cannot stand in awe of a person who is chewing gum. Not a stranger offered me candy. The porter who came to take my bag was a youth of a mild countenance whom anyone could manage. I had a feeling that he had failed in the fifth grade. Just the same, I did not want him to find out that I had never been in a hotel before. "Hot weather we're having," he ventured.

"Yes, quite hot."

"Ice water?" he asked.

"Yes, ice water," I hastened to answer, remembering the "Ice Water" sign in that other hotel.

Poor rooms they were to which I was led, and disappointing the program of adventure that was offered; yet a sense of importance filled me as I left. "I'm a person who has been to a hotel," I said to myself with relief. "Now, I know I can do it."

Yet how sad to lose one's illusions, to know that I had feared drummers in vain!

On the Last Day of School

"SEEMS queer for school to be nearly over," everyone is saying. "Doesn't seem like any time since we said, 'A month from today school will be out.'" You have wanted it to be over but now that the end has come, there is an unexplainable sadness about it. Excitement sends people wandering from group to group, no one quite believing that the last day is here. Details that you had not been conscious of now stand out with startling clearness—the way the light falls on a certain wall, marking the hour with unerring precision, the woman across the street who was always sweeping her porch, the morning-glories on a fence. Tomorrow you would not see them.

As you enter the building, all the days of the year hasten out to meet you, as if by special invitation—the day when you had that math exam, the day when you spilled ink on your best dress, the day of the picnic on the river, the night of the banquet, the morning when your brother broke his arm. They troop in and out of your mind, half-gay, half-tinged with regret. Everywhere there is an air of idleness.

All busyness has gone from the straying pens and pencils, from the ownerless bottles of ink. The examination questions on the blackboards have frayed out at the edges, as if knowing that their day had passed. "Lost" announcements appear in every corner. The leaves of a book are blowing in the wind. Why does that flapping of idle pages affect you so strangely? You close the book and put it in a desk.

You turn to a group that is talking about summer, and think swiftly of all that you want to do in vacation, with no bells to stop you, no algebra! "Were you ever so glad to see school close?" you ask.

"Never!" everyone answers with conviction.

The bell rings and the day shifts to the inside. Singing comes in from the other rooms, together with the smell of jasmines and honeysuckle.

Then the day clicks its heels and joins the others. You stop on the stairs, strangely suspended in time. School has ended and yet vacation has not yet begun. Some unreality closes in upon you. There comes a sudden moment when you lay a bare hand on Time standing cool and still. It is you who are moving, crowding school back into other days. If you could only stop yourself from hurrying so!

A voice interrupts, "Isn't it good that school is over?"

"Yes, isn't it?" you agree as you step gaily out into vacation. "I was never so glad!"

You think no more of Time.

On Having One's Acquaintance Cut

IN early youth the occasion of not being spoken to has no entertaining aspects. One has not enough subtlety at eight to deal with so negative a situation. Epithets and recriminations can be hurled at the silent figure, but she who does not speak is clearly the victor. The only recourse of the victim is to go weeping home, determining not to speak herself at their next meeting. Guarded as it is by this system of self-propagation, there seems no danger that the occasion will become extinct.

But as one's sense of humor and appreciation of the dramatic arts grow, the situation becomes reversed. The scene becomes filled with possibilities for the one whose acquaintance is being cut. She is favored with a gratuitous exhibition of silent drama and may respond or not as she chooses.

Though I myself have walked into this occasion only once that I can be sure of, yet I consider myself quite an authority in the matter, because of the unimpeachable manner in which it was in this instance executed. I was going down the street of a very friendly little town where salutations were attended to by the subconscious mind, when I detected in the

distance the approach of a proud spirit. Her disdain increased as the square of the distance diminished between us. I, innocent of any slight in store for me, was impressed even then and greeted her with respect. But the figure, aside from a swift detour, seemed totally incognizant of my presence; her glance swerved neither to the right nor to the left but bore nobly, magnificently, onward. I must have been a very satisfactory subject for the outpouring of her spleen, for in amazement I stopped to appreciate to the full the artistry of the passing drama. I had not realized that it could be done with such finish off the stage of a tent show. Every angry character whose wrath you have not seen kindled is a comic figure on any stage, but a ponderous personage entering irate upon a lowly village street is humor incarnate. Self-sacrificingly, they scatter amusement freely without thought of return to themselves. Or am I mistaken—do they have inner rewards as the occasion lives on in their mind in the night watches?

I realize that not every performer plays her part with such spirit. The occasion often descends from exalted drama to petty bickering and tiresome dissension. When the performance becomes second-rate I should advise its discontinuance. If you cannot be slighted with éclat, this occasion is not worth while.

On Having to Wear Your Last Year's Coat

SEEN in the bulk, coats in any community follow a general law of averages. A certain number of years one has a new coat; a certain number, one doesn't. But the matter, alas, is not often viewed in this large scientific light. A coat is a personal affair, and so remains until its final passing.

There are, of course, wider aspects. One does not suffer alone but feels buoyed up by the unexpressed sympathy of a large number of other people who are also having to wear their last year's coat. There is never any organized company of those who are passing through this period of low social status, for a part of the ritual of behavior for these off-seasons in one's wardrobe is to take no notice of the situation except in the precincts of one's family. Here one may express one's real opinions, but when one steps beyond the family threshold one must put on the old coat and a bold face and go forth with a manner of great indifference to such a small matter as the age of a coat.

Another point to be kept in mind by the owner of a second or third or fourth season coat is to put off recognizing the approach of winter as long as possible.

"Hadn't you better wear your coat?" someone asks solicitously.

"No, I'm just *not* cold!" you state quite firmly. So you do not wear the coat until strong pressure is brought to bear upon you. When the coat cannot be longer avoided, you put it on, but you take it off immediately upon arriving anywhere because "I'm so hot! Why do they keep this building so hot? I should think you would be roasting in those coats." But they are not roasting, because they have new coats. It is the winter when you cannot afford to be cold, but also the winter when they cannot afford to be hot.

This can never be a lazy winter. The following season you may fall back on your clothes for distinction and not exert your personality unduly, but this winter you must distinguish yourself in other ways. You must employ conversation and charming manners in order to make people forget the deficiencies in your apparel. As a rule this device is successful, though there are some persons who persist in making a careful inventory of your entire wardrobe before they will look you in the eyes. As a kind of afterthought they see you. When you meet such people with your old coat on, you try to comfort yourself with a high-minded view of the matter, saying to yourself, "I don't care what she thinks of my clothes, for she doesn't know whether I am in them or not!"

But you do care. It is just such a person who makes you care. On the other hand, there is a comfortable proportion of people with whom the age of a coat does not matter. They take the statistical attitude. You find yourself cultivating their society with added enthusiasm in the lean years.

But as each winter advances, and coats get rained and snowed and sat upon, the aristocracy of the new-coaters dwindles. You feel less conspicuous. "Really my coat looks as well as Marian's," you console yourself. "I should never have anything but opossum on a coat. An old coat is so comfortable, you know."

It is well to set up a program of feelings, actions, remarks and calculations as early in life as possible, for this occasion is not one that passes with one's teens. It is one of the permanent casualties till one reaches some heavenly estate where all things will possibly be new. One may perhaps then be enrolled among the saints and it may not make any difference to notice when they all stand up to sing that you are the only person wearing a coat with a belt! But on this earth the occasion of having to wear your last year's coat will always have its calamitous aspects.

On the Occasion of Suppressed Rehearsals

SUPPRESSED rehearsals are one of the most strenuous amusements in which one engages in certain decades of one's existence, for so much is required of one at every performance. One has not only to take the leading rôle oneself but has also to direct the company of actors, time their entrances, shift the scenery and manipulate the lights and curtain. The inspiration for this esoteric form of drama usually arises from some incident that occurs in the outer world, some circumstance, or remark made by another. You yourself, as heroine, are furious, or chagrined, or hurt—but silent.

However, when the actors come on the stage of your mind it is an entirely different matter. You courageously address the persons to whom you have not previously expressed your opinions. They listen with dawning admiration, amazed at your significant utterances, your convincing arguments. Each one who enters is as but clay in your hands. You mold his thoughts and actions at will. You restate your position with growing emphasis, but your opponent finds no words for reply. He is swiftly overthrown, utterly defeated. You view the scene with a wide

flourish of satisfaction, think of more clever things to say, and rehearse the act again in order to insert them.

You do not always offer the finished production to the public. The drama does not run so smoothly when the real actors come upon the stage. In fact you often find yourself, in the very midst of the scene, crossing to the other side of the street, or going through another door in order to avoid meeting members of your own cast.

But often, if one is a person of spirit, not given to stagefright, the doors are eventually thrown open to the outside world. After having listened in upon a number of my own private performances, and after having had a box-seat at the first nights of the productions of others, I have become skilled in detecting the long, hard rehearsals that must have been put on for imaginary listeners. I recognize now the rise of a curtain when I see it, though I may have to view it from behind a post in an obscure gallery. I can almost prompt the leading lady if she falters in her lines. You know the star because she speaks the initial piece. "I'm simply not going to put up with this any longer," she may state. Or, "I've stood this as long as I am going to." Or, "I just want to say this much. . ." Or, "I'm getting tired of being . . ."

The minor characters who are now actually present

usually interrupt here and there with just the right cue, for a torrent of words rushes out with a rhythm that savors of long practice—words that ". . . wear long boots, hard boots, they walk off proud!" The lines are spoken, down to the last curtain. Everyone remains still, lost in amazement at the unexpected finish of the soliloquies. At the close, after a respectful pause, the audience reaches for its hat and crowds down the aisle thoughtfully. Exhausted but vindicated, the leading lady seeks her dressing-room.

One does not have to take the trouble, after this, to cross to the other side of the street in order to avoid fellow actors or audiences. They see to that!

Even now I frequently find a crowd assembling in my mind, to hear my side of various matters. I see myself rise to the occasion, and swagger across the stage, emitting a bold line or two—but these performances have lost their thrill somehow. My later-day audiences always laugh at the wrong time, which is enough to discourage the most hardened professional. At the most serious moment some insensitive critic will shout a confusing "Bravo!" from the dress circle.

Enjoy this brief prominence while you may, for some day the critic within yourself will rob you of all dramatic satisfaction.

On Counting Ninety-Nine White Horses and One Grey Mule

FATE has to be in some way actively tampered with while one's future is still in a state of flux. Palm reading, divinations at Hallowe'en, and other forms of fortune telling are entertaining but too passive to satisfy thoroughly. Feeling the need of joining aggressive hands with the future and hastening the coming of romance, one enters with zest into a pact to cooperate with fortune.

I shall designate the occasion as that of Counting Ninety-Nine White Horses and One Grey Mule, though it may not be horses and mules that are counted now. In magic, as well as in other fields, the horse has been displaced by the machine and the grey mule has lost the prestige that he once possessed in the affairs of the heart. The later method of counting the numbers on license plates of automobiles is probably as efficacious as the white horses and the grey mule, though the mule was a romantic figure, standing stalwart in the midst of the vagaries of fate. No doubt aërial numbers now weave a similar spell. In some sections men with beards serve the same purpose as the white horses. The

thing counted has little to do with the excitement of this sport, so long as the climax remains the same—the belief that you will marry the person with whom you first shake hands after you have counted ninety-nine white horses and one grey mule.

It is quite amazing how this occasion never loses its thrill, though mules may go and machines may come. All the more puzzling is it when one reviews the number of discrepancies that have entered yearly into the calculations of anxious participants. The consummations of romance have not always been effected. Love frequently takes a recalcitrant course even in this apparently definite system. Often, however, it is because the rules are not abided by. I know personally of one instance where the work of weeks was brought to nought by the indiscretions of one person. Three girls who had just "stamped" their ninety-nine white horses and the climactic grey mule, having with great care extricated themselves from a boarding school, went for a little fresh air in the park, where to their great astonishment they found three boys, also walking for air, boys whom they knew quite well, boys not averse to being shaken hands with. One girl rushed ahead and grasped the hands of two of the boys before the other two girls realized the advantage she had taken of them. The spell, of course, was broken. Not a single girl present ever married any one of those boys. Which goes

to show how important it is to abide by the rules.

It never seemed quite fair to me that the Baptist girls in our town were allowed to count the horses that passed by during the morning church service. The Methodists and Presbyterians had colored windows that gave a tantalizing sameness to all passing animals, so they were always behind the girls of the Baptist persuasion. Why should the Baptists, just because they had clear glass in their windows, get a head start at all of the boys in town? Some handicap should have been placed on them, to balance the discrimination against those who had inherited Methodism.

Often the boys of a town, getting wind of events, become wary and throw all schemes into chaos. Either they absent themselves at the critical moment or develop sprained wrists or soiled hands. Fate is not always to be blamed for the misadventure.

But after all excuses have been made, it must be admitted that Romance accepts this homage carelessly and is exceedingly inattentive to the claims of her devotees. Yet her very disdain attracts new followers and this occasion goes on from the muscle age of the horse to the mechanical age of the automobile, with little diminution in fervor and enthusiasm.

On Being Reformed by Brothers or What Every Sister Knows

A SISTER is born into criticism, nurtured by gratuitous advice and perfected by chastening wrath—that is, if she has brothers. From the moment of her arrival she becomes a cooperative enterprise, a veritable Cause among them.

If one survives the application of this code of brotherly love, one cannot reflect upon their reclamation policy without a degree of admiration. Though living under the same roof with any reformer has its unpleasant aspects, yet brothers as reformers are, comparatively speaking, rather refreshing. They are so utterly frank, employing no flattery, no diplomacy. One knows where one stands with them and can be sure that no concealed motive lurks in their breasts. They simply state the bare totality of facts with no attempt at garnishing:

"We cannot have you running around the neighborhood with your hair like that!"

This statement is followed immediately by a specific remedy, perhaps by an exhibition of expert barbering, or by the application of water from the garden hose.

Or this injunction may be untactfully hurled:

"Don't fling your legs out like that when you walk! Walk straight." Compulsory exercises in walking are administered.

Perhaps now a race of brothers is developing that will gather psychological strategy from the atmosphere and appropriate it for its own use in the perfection of the character of sisters. But, speaking from the point of view of the sister of four brothers, I rather hope that this science will not invade these areas, for such progress would have its drawbacks. Though it might add to their efficiency as executives of the betterment campaigns in hand, it would make them less interesting as brothers one has had.

The sister to be reclaimed finds a certain relief inherent in their present clumsy methods. If brothers were more subtle in their operations, a sister might be inveigled into a self-improvement scheme which would involve her in having to expend energy on her own reformation. As they are, they elicit no sympathy, arouse no disquieting longings toward improvement, put one under no obligations. Nor do they expect cooperation from the object of their endeavors; in fact, they seem to court opposition. A sister enjoys all the pleasures of irresponsible recalcitrance. How few reformers really grant their victims this last resort of privilege!

I wonder sometimes that brothers persist so consistently in their efforts from generation to genera-

tion. They seem to work for no rewards. There is nothing in the annals of emotional tradition to lead them to expect the satisfaction of gratitude immediate or deferred. Was any sister ever known to say, after she rose to the heights of eminence, "All that I am I owe to my brother"? Has any flattering commission ever divulged statistics showing that sisters who have had brothers have walked more perfectly than those who have had none?

Yet brothers have not been discouraged but have continued their efforts in season and off season. Self-sacrificing brothers have rescued their tomboy sisters from the top of neighboring barns and garages, lest the family be disgraced in the eyes of the community; they have terrified them with snakes to instil them with courage; they have jumped at them from behind doors to help them to conquer their fears; they have labored to disrupt incipient romance because the hand in question was not worthy of her regard; they have stamped out sisters' cigarettes lest they become abandoned women!

Where else could one find such an unmitigated love of virtue for its own sake?

On Attempting to Reform One's Family

THIS occasion does not arise in a large desire to improve one's family but is precipitated by a specific irritation at some particular member of the household.

Almost any deviation of the family from the prevailing standards may serve as the precipitant, though today the flaw in the body domestic is likely to be the length of a mother's skirt. It is not surprising that this is a point of high vulnerability. In this age of confusing fluctuation in skirt lengths, even the most alert specialist in styles finds it difficult to maintain the correct distance between the hem of her dress and the floor. How then is it to be known by the laity, especially mothers, subject as they are to the daily routine of chronic emergencies? At the time of the latest pronouncement on the rise or fall in skirt lengths she may be in the midst of measles in bulk, or may be engaged in making estimates of the probable cost per pair of tonsil and adenoid operations. It is impossible for her to keep abreast of the fashions. Even if she succeeds in obtaining proper data, she may not wish to conform without protest to the wasteful and arbitrary decrees of Parisian circles.

But a daughter emerging into her teens automatically becomes aware that her mother's dress is either too long or too short. She has no basis for perceiving the subtleties involved. It is a perfectly obvious deficiency which ought to be remedied. Immediately she confronts her mother with this shortcoming in her wardrobe. Before mother has had time to recover from this first indictment, her shoes are added to the list of grave offenses. "Mary's mother," it seems, has just bought pumps.

Then does the mother know, if hearing she hears, that the rigorous season of rehabilitation is upon the family. She braces herself for the coming storm, for once the torrent of criticism bursts forth it will inundate every retreat. Her daughter, having once committed herself to this program of renovation, cannot, she is sure, retract—not at thirteen. One imperfection laid bare will but reveal another.

It is much more difficult to do over a family than to endure being done over. Only the persons who have themselves struggled with, and wept over, their persistent imperfections can ever appreciate this self-appointed task. Who that has not attempted to curb the indiscriminate and embarrassing publicity sense of an Aunt Emma or a Cousin Lou can know how impossible is the situation in which one is entangled? They cannot be endured as they are, talking as they do around the neighborhood about the private affairs

of the family, about what you looked like as a baby and what the Sunday dinner usually consists of. Yet it is impossible to change them. If one has not striven with a father's perverse selection of ties, hats, and opinions, how can she have any conception of the perplexities involved? A single day of trying to enforce manners on brothers, of endeavoring to make them see that they are going with the wrong girl, will do more to make one properly evaluate the cost of keeping a family in the ways of respectability than a lifetime of study on the problem.

It is a relief, to one's self if not to others, to pass beyond this acute era into that stage of at least semi-acceptance of the family as it is. Yet if there is a younger sister this state of quiescence cannot be long maintained. Waves of reform break over one's head, but not unpleasantly if one has in the meanwhile felt the liberating influence of nonconformity. There is a certain thrill in looking at oneself through the eyes of others and discovering that one is a problem, in having someone else take over the responsibility for one's social standing in the neighborhood.

An older sister must walk warily for two or three years after she catches that first puzzled expression of disapproval on the countenance of a sister in her teens. She has never before been a dubious asset in her sister's eyes and is loathe to relinquish this approval. She learns that the better sort of people do

not take the short-cut by the railroad track; that in fact no one walks at all if he can ride. When one walks people think that it is because she has no way of riding. Walking has no prestige in this province—that she is made clearly to see. Either she must submit to public opinion or try to change it. Concession in these minor tastes is often the better way. At evening when the shades of the town are drawn she may go forth on foot without annoyance to the stern upholders of the local *mores*.

Who would add to the burdens of a young reformer who is having difficulty enough with the other members of the family—who that has herself struggled with this same exasperating problem?

PART IV

For Persons of Any Age

On Being Turned into a Tree

NO god in disguise ever came to our house at dusk, replenishing our supper milk-pitcher by magic, or turning us into trees. So far as I know, the gods were never under any social obligation to our family. Only presiding elders came, and book-agents who were out of money, and sellers of lightning-rods who had lost their way. Jehovah, though he had a certain pioneering instinct that might have made him appreciate our neighborhood, made no house-to-house investigation of hospitality in our section. Lesser beings ran these errands, but in foreign lands only. So our plate of hot bread was never miraculously refilled when there were unexpected guests at supper; we simply ate fewer biscuits.

If I had known then about Jove and Hermes, Baucis and Philemon, how hopefully I should have waited in the evening when I came in from gathering up the eggs, eager to be the one to announce a possible god in waiting. I should have looked, too, with a more personal interest upon all trees, the big live-oak by the gate, the mesquite in the pasture. Who had come to visit them at supper? Had it been by request

that they became live-oaks and mesquites? Why not huisache * or chaparral?

But we were of the Hebrews, not of the Greeks, and we knew nothing of Baucis, "sprouting with sudden leaves of sprightly green"; nor of Daphne, daughter of a river god, who in her need was "into a laurel grown." Had Jehovah cared less for pomp and circumstance, for golden streets and jasper walls, we too might have looked forward to a green old age; but as it was, we were fated to be angels.

Being an angel has its esthetic satisfactions, I am sure, yet in certain Greek moments I have gone through woods rather enviously. I have looked appraisingly at trees, wondering what clothes I should like to wear forever, if I should suddenly be consulted: the beech, with its grey kid glove and patrician instep; the sassafras with its different kinds of leaves so that one need never be troubled by monotony of personality; the birch that gives the impression of being permanently just back from the laundry; plane trees with their summer underwear of yellow silk; the mesquite dripping green, with cardinals bathing in its branches; the spruce entangled in stars on a crisp winter night; poplars silvered by the wind; the clustered lavender of chinaberry trees, clinging to their golden balls till far into the winter. If one

* Pronounced wesatch and shaparrál. Note for provincial Easterners and The New Century Dictionary.

were asked to make a swift decision, how could one choose? If it were winter, one might say, "Spruce!" But if it were spring and there were need of haste?

There is nothing to guide one in such a selection, for not an oak, not a linden, not a laurel, has ever made report, so one cannot be sure of tree satisfactions. But think of going bareheaded in the wind and rain forever, of feeling the sun in one's hair, of sitting down by a river and never coming in! One always has to leave rivers too soon. To loiter through eternity by a brook, to shelter campers for the night and be awakened by the fragrance of their wood-smoke and morning coffee; or to be a giant cotton-wood, protecting covered-wagon pilgrims, being party to their dreams. Would not this be immortality indeed?

On the Praise of Hanging Gardens

ON days when there is need of dreaming of old and beautiful things that perhaps never were, I get out the hanging gardens of Babylon. Either Nebuchadnezzar constructed gardens in the sky, or he set the imagination of the world at work to create them. Which would be the more important fact, the actuality or the dream, I do not know; which I should prefer, I cannot decide.

The hanging gardens may have been built in honor of a goddess; or because the wife of Nebuchadnezzar, a daughter of the Median king, was, even in the midst of the splendor of Babylon, homesick for her Assyrian hills. Amytis, the queen, may have sighed and said:

"I sicken of these steaming shallow lands!
. . . . . .
O King, would thou and Babylon ne'er had been!
I die for pines and storms. . . .
O! for Assyria, where each mountain stands,
With pine trees to the peak, and the great stride
Of the north wind, voiced as a god's commands

Shakes forests into music far and wide

. . . . . .

But I mid ooze and baking bricks must bide."

One can see what a rebel the brick-baking Babylon might have made of the most loyal of queens. To see nothing from your window but flat bricks a-baking, to smell nothing but their dry dust, to have a husband who talked only of enterprises in brick, might plunge a queen into a madness for pines and mountains, and might drive a king to build a "pensile paradise."

Or the hanging gardens may have come about in this way:

Time: 2500 years ago.
Place: The streets of Babylon.
Characters: Two travelers.

First traveler: Do you see the new palace of the king?

Second traveler: Yes, no one could mistake it; but what is the other building connected with it by the high passage-way?

First traveler: That was his father's palace. They are to plant trees on the elevated walks. Even now they are terracing the stages to the temple.

Second traveler: But see! Is not that the king?

First traveler: It could be no other.

Second traveler: How he rides! Will he not make Babylon a place that the gods shall envy?

First Traveler: Even now the green trees thrust themselves up into the floor of heaven.

Time: Many years late.
Place: A town far away from Babylon.
Characters: First traveler and young men and women who have not seen Babylon.

Young man who has not seen Babylon: Was the city beautiful?

First traveler: Babylon? Babylon was the gate to the land of the gods. The king hung green gardens in the sky. In the morning the queen walked here, and peacocks spread their iridescent tails in the sun.

Young woman who has not seen Babylon: But were not the gods jealous?

First traveler: No, for the gods themselves walked here in the cool of the evening, flashing like stars in the dark.

Or the hanging gardens may have been created in other ways. I care not so much how they were done, but in the blue gloom of the past I keep them high above a great city, where people who are lonely for their hills may walk at evening. On days when the

ways of earth are flat I walk through these gardens myself, gesturing praise for all who have released wonder in the world.

On Considering the Possibility of Knowing One Bird Intimately

HE sat across the table from me three times a day and we contemplated each other with unfeigned interest—a sparrow, I think he was. My first response was to throw him some crumbs from my tray, but he looked at me haughtily, as if to say, "What do you think I am, a park pigeon?" I saw at once that he was a sparrow of parts, that we could meet only on a basis of equality. The husks of patronage were not for such free spirits as he.

He had appeared at breakfast as I lay on a sleeping porch, which jutted out into a maple tree. His arrival had been timely, for I could do nothing but study the designs of the flying yellow leaves and watch the sun filter through the shadows. Sitting down on a limb opposite me, he began his morning meal in a reserved manner that won my instant respect. Not an inquiry into the state of my health, nor a mention of how little he had slept. He quoted nothing from the morning papers.

By lunch time he was back, and in a chatty mood. We did not lack subject matter for conversation for at least we had the weather in common. A bird

should be able to speak with authority here, if there be authority in this field. "I see that you are picking your feathers. I judge that means rain," I intimated with a gesture. But he looked at me quite condescendingly as if about to remark:

"You're altogether mistaken. That's not at all why I am rearranging my feathers. The fact is, I'm going on a journey."

"Oh, a long journey?"

"What difference does the length have to do with it? It is, I suppose, ten thousand wings away. We are rehearsing a new chorus for the dawn."

"Yes, I always hear it over in the park"—and remembering that artists enjoy flattery, "You have to awaken the dawn, of course."

"Not at all. The birds long ago discovered that that was a mistake. Didn't you hear how they overslept one morning and the sun rose just the same? We've sung better ever since. Some of the front-tree sopranos left but we do very well without them. Very nice, though, high up in some tree, swinging in the morning wind." Such was the wordless conversation that flew between us.

Suddenly I felt the uselessness of roofs and walls. I felt condemned for living in a house that had displaced three maples and four great beeches. He lingered at luncheon as if about to entrust to me some great secret, but his stiff beak could not unbend into

confidence. Instead, a long table-silence ensued between us.

At length someone came out and removed my tray. Thinking our conversation finished for the afternoon, I took up my book. But I was not to read, for the sparrow appeared to reproach me, twitting me for my bad manners. Books are one of the great advantages that we have over birds, I thought, with a touch of superiority. We at least are not ignorant of the past.

"Ignorant of the past!" He wrapped his wings about him with a regal gesture. I seemed aware then of all that birds sing of in the dawn; of their flight over the Seven Seas and reed-bordered rivers; over deserts and olive groves; and the hill town of Assisi; of the far continents where they have rested, the mountains that have been their home. I saw every small wing stirred by wonder.

I put down my book and gave myself over to the contemplation of the possibility of knowing at least one bird intimately. How humble a desire this seemed—only one bird out of the millions that flew over the earth, and that one a sparrow. If I should seek out a scarlet tanager or a Spanish oriole, I might be accused of ulterior motives, but a sparrow, the lowliest of the least of these—who could charge me here with the vice of social climbing? Having thus vin-

dicated myself I sought him out with leisure and entertained him with high silence.

What satisfactory hours we had together! To eat three meals a day across from a person is to make great strides in intimacy. I, on the one hand, ascended the steeps of sky romance; he, on the other—but I must be modest about the benefits derived from my society—he at least enjoying the supply of tender green worms. But how was I to know that I knew?

I suppose I should not boast of my bird connections, for I may have misunderstood him altogether. He may now do musical comedies at dawn, setting forth my ridiculous interpretations of his luncheon remarks; or he may fly in processional at vespers with the feathered grey friars, lamenting the errors into which human wisdom has fallen. Yet I never quite lose hope. Who knows what robin or thrush or yellow-hammer may come to me at tea some day, to make a clean breast of himself, revealing to me the depths of feathered mysteries, the heights of winged despair?

The Occasion of the Past on Which I Should Rather Have Been Present

I HAVE reflected in unused moments upon what functions of the past I should consider attending, if committees of interesting ancients should make urgent request of me.

I should look with favor upon Babylon some night thousands of years ago, when the meaning of the stars was first flashing into the understanding of old astrologers, huddled together on dark roof-tops, making their celestial reckonings. What to them were Mars and Jupiter, Venus and Saturn? What talk came up from the streets below where by torch lights merchants, *en route* to far lands, waited with their merchandise of pearls and fine linen, cinnamon and frankincense? If I were at liberty to do so, I should like to invite these roof-top Babylonians to witness with me that later scene when Galileo Galilei bowed an unpenitential knee before the cardinals clad in scarlet.

I should like to have seen Jerusalem from a hill, in the early morning, about three thousand years ago; to have come down into the city where the fragrance

of freshly cut cedar filled the air and peacocks were spreading their tails in the sun.

I wish I might have been called in to judge a singing match between shepherds contending on a hill in Sicily, when Daphnis and Chloë were watching their flocks and a wood nymph was a reality among them. Would they permit a pilgrim through time to award the tender young kid when the music from their pipes was finished, or to hold in his hand their carved wooden bowl filled with foaming milk for their beloved Pan?

I should like to have planted a garden near the Sea of Galilee a little less than two thousand years ago, a garden with mustard, where birds would come to lodge in its branches, where gardeners on leave would linger and go forth to make immortal the greenness which I had borrowed for a while from earth and sky.

I should like to have walked through the Roman Forum in the days of its glory, before the barbarians had thought of sweeping down from the north, while the smoke from the fire of the vestal virgins was yet blue against the Seven Hills.

There is Baghdad, too, in the days of Ali Baba, when a measuring-cup yet had possibilities and mystery still lurked in waiting oil-jars. There are the buried cities of Mexico when they were yet cities,

and rose-venders mingled their cries with the shouts of water-carriers.

It would have been good to have seen them build the great cathedrals, to have watched their dreams emerge in stone and color.

I am sorry to have missed Italy when it was shaking the dust of centuries from old Greek manuscripts; and not to have been at the dock when Columbus first set sail.

To have been an innkeeper in the vicinity of the Field of the Cloth of Gold; or a boatman on the royal barge when Queen Elizabeth was floating down the Thames in regal procession—such occupations might lure me from the present.

Yet there is another event which I should look upon with higher favor. I should be utterly beside myself if I should be invited by the gods, Izanaghi and Izanami, to be present in Japan at the time of its creation. If I could with proper courtesy suggest the seat from which I preferred to witness the event, my selection would be

> " . . . . on the lower stair
> That scaled by steps of gold to Heaven-gate."

where I could gaze

> " . . . . with wonder at the sudden view
> Of all this world at once."

I can imagine how it would be: green-jade meadows and blue-paper mountains piled high with snow; by night, the fragrance of plum blossoms, by day wistaria and cherry, and

> "The wild geese returning
> Through the misty sky
> . . . . . like
> A letter written
> In faint ink."

"Rice fields lined with sheaves of grain, . . . standing clear in a lightning flash";

> "The spring rain
> Which hangs to the branches
> Of the green willows
> . . . . like pearls
> Threaded on a string."

When all waterfalls had been finished, all bamboos set growing, every sea-gull started on its flight, I should lean forward perilously on my stair, knowing that the moment for which I had come had arrived. The gods, looking upon their work, would have no doubt that it was good but would know that it was yet incomplete, for they would have no right to let mortals look upon swiftly passing beauty without making it possible for them to recreate it in their thoughts.

Then I should see them step down from the blue-paper mountains, gather up all remembered beauty from the earth, and fashion it into poetry. Certain mortals, hearing their footsteps on the mountains, marking the passing of their feet through the jade valleys, would follow till they heard the voice of the gods intoning the words of the first of the first editions.

As I returned through layers of time I should see the makers of poetry following still in the wake of the gods.

On Buying Shoes with Rose-Colored Edgings

WE do not now go boldly out into the spring to buy shoes with rose-colored edgings, but I think it would be well to celebrate the day when one did go forth on such an expedition.

The sole history of this adventure is recorded in the notebook of Leonardo da Vinci. "Memo: that on this day [April 8, 1503] I have given Salai two gold ducats, as he tells me that he wishes to have a pair of shoes made for himself with rose-colored edgings, so that he has yet to give me nine of the twenty ducats which he owes me, eighteen of which I lent him in Milan and two in Venice."

Prodigal spring shopping this! In debt already several ducats and borrowing yet two more because he must have the cobbler make him these gay shoes! But Salai had just come to Florence in March and very likely he found everybody in Florence wearing shoes with rose and blue and green edgings. Everybody in Florence! Who was not in Florence then? The yeast of beauty and learning was leavening the city. Sculptors, painters and poets were at work. Raphael was hastening thither. Erasmus was eager to come—though he would not have added any gaiety

to the spring apparel, for, he wrote a friend, "As soon as I get any money, I shall buy Greek books and then I shall buy some clothes." One Florentine citizen "went stately, clad in crimson," arraying his table with delicate linen and crystal, that he might daily participate in the ritual of the appreciation of Hellenic beauty. Salai himself was a favorite pupil of Leonardo and revelled in the gorgeous richness that surrounded his master, the artist who had not long ago completed the Last Supper on the walls of a refectory in Milan, who was even now painting his Mona Lisa.

If ever extravagant spring shopping was justified was it not in Florence then? Should not the purchase of new clothes be dependent on the richness of life within and without one, rather than on the state of one's purse or the season of the year that it happens to be? If a Leonardo is painting a Mona Lisa in one's neighborhood, a cowled monk frescoing a wall with angels, or translating an old classic that had been long since forgotten, is that not excuse enough for borrowing yet two more ducats, that one may idle gloriously by a bridge where Beatrice once chanced to go, or stroll across the Arno in splendor? Salai, indeed, was an ingenious youth, never lacking for excuses for celebrating with new apparel. This was not his first impetuous purchase. In April 1497, it was a cape he must have. "April," states one chronicler, "and

the beautiful youth desires to look like a white daffodil, so there is silver-cloth, green velvet to slash it, and fluttering ribbons and little gilt meshes." Perhaps he was observing the eve of the completion of Leonardo's Last Supper. On other Aprils it is silver buckles, or feathers, or rose-colored coats. But how dull would the Ponte Vecchio have been without such youths as he! Had it not been for these gay spirits who translated into outer symbols the richness of the renascent spirit, would all artists have been bound for Florence, all scholars starving for a passport?

Whenever life is gorgeous within, set your heart on some impossibly lovely thing, whether you can have it or not—shoes, or a hat, or a dress, or a house built over a brook. If you can borrow the ducats, go forth in April with a sixteenth century Florentine spirit, and commit enormous extravagance. If you have neither ducats nor borrowing influence with those who do have, go forth in April nevertheless, with your soul clad stately, and celebrate the fact that you are a person with taste who can appreciate the spring shopping of such as Salai.

For One Who Wishes to Be Stolen by Fairies

(Written for persons long past seven)

IT is rather presumptuous, I am sure, for me to publish any data that would offer hope to those who would be stolen by fairies; that is, to those over seven, for after seven the odds are against one. One's pleasures become too complicated, one's opinions too decided, one's soul too purposeful.

Though I offer no absolute guarantee of abduction, does it not seem reasonable to suppose that the fairies would choose to associate with those whose society they enjoy; that if one desires to be stolen he must bring his character into conformity with their ideals? The fairies do not borrow people to improve them; they make no provision in their country for reform. After much research, I judge that they leave to mortals the task of reclaiming their own characters from matter-of-factness, lack of humor, intemperate diligence, and the other vices that shut one out of fairyland.

In late March or early April I meditate upon the fairy documents of such countries as Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Switzerland, Germany; for I have not yet

given up the hope of being chosen myself, of listening to their music behind waterfalls, of strolling through beautiful valleys, arrayed in a peaked red hat, a scarlet coat and green pantaloons, of resting on a heather-scented island long lost at sea.

My conclusion about the fairies is that they have no publicity sense, no desire to advertise, no ambition to bring about a bigger and better fairyland, for they endeavor as far as possible to blot out from the minds of mortals who have sojourned there all remembrance of their abode with them. Thus they ensure silence on the part of returned travelers, making it impossible for them to recall what food they ate, what drinks were in vogue, what battlefields were visited, what cities were inhospitable. If you would find favor with the fairies, therefore, you must be the kind of person who can be content not to talk of his experiences abroad.

This ban on the travel talk and travel sketch no doubt accounts for the universal good-will that mortals feel for fairyland. No person can be furious because a former traveler takes him in tow and exhausts the adventure of the trip before arrival. No cabin-mate can boast, "This is my forty-ninth crossing." In fairyland all things are ever new to all who enter there; and it is therefore ever beloved.

The fairies make another provision, too. They permit no one to take souvenirs home with him. A

child once wished exceedingly to carry back with him the golden ball with which the son of the king of the fairies played, but his request was refused. The fairies will have none of your society unless you can look without envy on all that you see. Not a single scarlet feather can you take with you, nor silver shoon, nor necklace of moonbeams, nor a cobweb dancing frock! Not a tea-set of blue harebells, not even the memory of the things that one had for tea! Empty-handed one must recross its borders, though one's mind may be filled with delightful, forgotten things. Imagination, I think, must be the forgotten information that one has learned in fairyland.

When I grow homesick for the blue valleys of the moon or long to revisit the lands to the east of the sun, I begin to repeat anew the elfin creeds. I promise to keep faith with all beautiful though unfamous places, all unadvertised regions; to love nothing less because it is small, to love nothing more because it is old. I make my confession to the fairies for being so distraught over leaving that yellow tea-set in Florence, for having to make mention here and there of the moonlight in the valley before Assisi. I swear never to try to tell everything about anything.

Surely, they will be impressed with such humility on the part of any mortal!